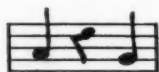


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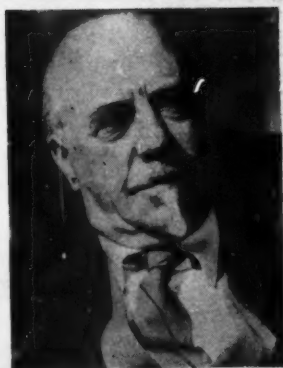


December, 1954
Volume 21, No. 4

BERLIOZ AND THE
VOCAL STYLE

by Jacques Barzun

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The American RECORD GUIDE

formerly
The American Music Lover

Volume 21, No. 4
December, 1954

Cover Picture: Sir Thomas Beecham, who once again reminds us of his affection for Delius (see page 112)

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December, 1954

Editorial Notes

THE SEASON of festive holidays is upon us and, as has been our custom for many years, we would like to extend the best of wishes to all our readers. Since music is a common bond that links men together our thoughts go out to those who know and value, as do we, the significant privilege allied with this one art. That does not mean that we must all agree on music or, for that matter, on evaluations that provoke differences of opinion. Rather than permit our differences to destroy that common bond, we might consider in these troublesome times the words of Robert Burton, who said that music "is a sovereign remedy against Despair and Melancholy." R. D. Darrell, in his delightful traversal of music in history, *Good Listening*, says: "In the present surveys of our own explorations of the world of music, you cannot expect that, merely because someone else has found certain composers worthy of respect or admiration, you *must* share the same feelings." The plea for tolerance is self-evident and as good a holiday message as any, since it invites us to respect each others likes and dislikes.

Our report on the Audio Fair last month has brought us many letters from visitors and others, who share our opinions on the abuse of music in sound these days. A Montreal reader, Mr. A. Pirie Miller, who was presumably a visitor to the Fair, voices the feelings of the majority when he says that he and his wife "have been so bombarded with Hi-Fi, that we were beginning to doubt our own judgment, but now thanks to you we are once more happily reestablished in our opinions . . . This will probably surprise you, but we think your editorial notes are the finest parable on life in this North America of today that it has been our good fortune to read."

Inasmuch as we were not thinking in terms of parables, but striving to do an honest reporting job on the state of things as we found them in a Fair primarily

disposed to the promulgation of music in reproduction, we feel complimented as well as humbled. No one likes the best in modern reproduction better than your editor, but he deplores the efforts of some who seek to distort music in reproduction by means of nefarious engineering. The wide usage of slogans today to heighten the interest in hi-fi instead of in music are syntomatic of a beguiling trend in the field of modern advertisement. It is our belief that true music listeners are not swayed by this sort of thing, any more than they are by conflicting advertising blurbs for cigarettes or other products on television or radio. Rather, they rely on their musical judgments and the naturalness of fine reproduction. When high fidelity becomes an obsession in itself, musical values go the way of the wind.

Enjoy your holidays, and may your journey through the New Year Gate be one that leads you into new discoveries in musical honesties and all the finer things of life.

Beecham and Delius

DELIUS: *Appalachia*; Closing Scene from *Koanga*; the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia LP ML-4915, \$5.95.

▲AGAIN we are vouchsafed a teasing taste of the priceless treasure that is the unplayed music of Delius. One notes that this disc was made possible by "the auspices of the Delius Trust," so that there is every reason to look for sequels. When or whether this will bring us the *Violin Concerto*, the *Piano Concerto* and *Sea Drift*, which last is very likely his greatest achievement, there is no telling, but I must say it is a disgrace that they are not in our catalogues at this late date. This is not to slight the grand and rhapsodic *Appalachia*, with its touching choral peroration based on the folksong that begins "O Honey (Nelly Gray), I

am going down the river in the morning . . ." This is early Delius, circa 1902, which was not too long after he had sojourned in Florida. The word "Appalachia" being the Indian name for North America, one reasonably infers the essence of the *fin-de-siècle* American Way of Life in these daydreaming but curiously alive pages. Sonata form, no, but a masterpiece of evocative tonal coloration, especially for any listener who has been exposed (as this one was for several years) to the Florida that Delius knew and loved. The opera *Koanga* was a very early effort of no signal distinctions, but Sir Thomas lavishes so much care on it that one almost equates it with *Appalachia* the first time around. The reproductive quality is superb throughout. —J.L.

TRENDS IN HIGH FIDELITY

IN OCTOBER, we spoke about London's recent adoption of the RIAA curve, informing our readers that recordings using that curve could be identified by the letter "R" before the matrix number which is cut into the record material below the label. This information was given us by one London official who seems to have erred in stating that the letter R was before the matrix number. Actually it appears *after* the matrix number. During the past month we had correspondence from numerous readers who informed us that the "AR" before the matrix number could not possibly indicate the newer pressings of the older recordings, as all London recordings had long borne the AR prefix. A call to London promptly informed us that someone had made a mistake as the letter R that indicated the latest pressing of the older records, appeared after the matrix number prefixed by other letters that have no bearing on indication of the RIAA curve.

London tells us that since the first of the year all recordings released have been made with the RIAA characteristic (the same curve, as we pointed out previously, as RCA Victor's New Orthophonic). If

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Berlioz and the Vocal Style

The "Te Deum" and other Works

By Jacques Barzun

ENVIOUS contemporaries of Berlioz used to predict that his music would be unplayable once he was no longer alive to conduct it. After his death, the catchphrase was that the works were ineffective unless played by an orchestra of virtuosos. And today, until several recordings of the same work have appeared, listeners are liable to the impression that one or other of the major scores falls short of expectations.

These three attitudes express one and the same fact, which is that Berlioz's style calls for precise musicianship. He has no need of virtuosos, and other than himself have conducted him superbly—witness Toscanini, Weingartner, Van Beinum and Erich Kleiber. But his music, especially when unfamiliar, requires a combination of exactitude and energy which is not the commonest endowment of either performers or conductors.

Sentimental languor will not do, and hare-brained frenzy is even worse. The reason is that his lyrical quality resides in the pervasively melodic substance and his dramatic power emerges from the calculated arrangement of parts. In him every instrument must sing and all must come together as in a perfect ballet. Phrasing, rhythm, dynamics, and purity of tone conspire, in the best moments, to produce unheard-of sensations, the acme of esthetic delight and intellectual force.

One is reminded of these stylistic truths, applicable to all dramatic composers but more or less perilous to neglect (your ordinary woodwinds won't even give them lip service), when one hears Bee-

cham's recording of the *Te Deum* (Columbia LP LM-4897). It is the first to appear and one is grateful for his initiative. Beecham evidently understands and enjoys the work, he takes in its richness, but it is doubtful whether he gives it out again.

He comes to grief, in the first place, from being unavoidably reduced to a single source of sound for a work that is spatially conceived. The orchestra must speak from a quarter opposite to that of the organ and each of the three choruses must be as distinct from the others as from the tenor solo. It is too bad that Berlioz did not foresee Mr. Edison's invention; he might have given up his old-fashioned ideas of antiphony and churchly dialogue. As the score stands its *dramatis personae* are diminished in stature by being forced to speak out of the same vent.

There is less excuse in the present recording for omitting the two orchestral movements (No. 3 and No. 7), which provide such magnificent contrasts in timbre while contributing to thematic unity. True, in his desire to have the work performed, Berlioz wrote that these two short numbers could be left out. But he knew what he was about when he composed them, and the amazingly concise *Praeludium* (No. 3) is a little masterpiece in itself.

Of the five remaining sections as rendered on this disc, much might be said in illustration of Schumann's dictum that Berlioz must be sung "*mit voller Brust*" before he can be comprehended. Here the brass in the opening movement are certainly too dim and the voices listless.

The *Tibi omnes* which comes next is delicately done, as is the tenor solo with chorus later on, but the intervening *Dignare* has a tendency to whine—the energy falters because of the wrong idea that tenderness does not require strength. And the same lack absolutely destroys the grandest movement, the *Judex crederis*, which is a triumph of craftsmanship and art, here reduced to dullness long-drawn out. Beecham is never at home with Berlioz's exhibitions of power: he cannot conduct the "Orgy" in *Harold* and he has not managed to impart motion and meaning to this hymn of praise mingled with awe.

A good excuse for such shortcomings in conductors and performers alike is that the traditional style of execution for choral works is overwhelmingly four-square. It also seeks a harmonious blend rather than wiry distinctness. And since Berlioz's writing looks homophonic, he is assimilated to the rest. In this version of the *Te Deum*, the least interesting, most conventional of the movements, the *Rex Christe*, is the best done.

Intimate Vocal Style

Turning from one of Berlioz's large canvases for voice and orchestra to a more intimate side of his vocal art, a new light on how to play Berlioz might come, perhaps, from listening to his orchestral songs, of which Dimitri Mitropoulos and Eleanor Steber bring us nine specimens. (It has been my privilege to hear advance pressings of a disc which will be released in January, containing *Summer Nights*, *The Captive*, *The Young Shepherd* and *Zaïde*.)

The cycle of six *Summer Nights* have been familiar with listeners since Maggie Teyte and Suzanne Danco have brought them to this country. Miss Steber gives them, despite an occasional wave and a few dragging tempos, an admirable interpretation, in which her French is especially to be commended. She is supported by a sensitive orchestra whose phrasing is generally as lyrical as hers. The six varied expressions of longing for the beloved are moving and true because the performers' musical instincts

have touched at all points and the form lives in every part.

The three additional songs, never before recorded, comprising *The Captive*, *The Young Shepherd* and the bolero *Zaïde* are a happy choice, for Miss Steber and for the composer. *The Captive* is a set of dramatic variations, melodically resourceful and felicitous in contour, in which Miss Steber is at her best. In *The Young Shepherd*, with its gentle acquiescence in melancholy, the superb horn obbligato should be more prominent than it is. As for the bolero, it subtly echoes the accompaniment of one stanza of *The Captive* and fittingly concludes an offering which shows in small compass Berlioz's power of construction side by side with his melodic versatility, both in their most transparent garb.

Those who admire the music of Berlioz, and those who are unfamiliar with his songs will find just cause to welcome this coming release.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio* (Opera in 2 Acts); Jan Peerce (Florestan), Rose Hampton (Leonore), Nicola Moscona (Don Fernando), Herbert Janssen (Don Pizarro), Sidor Belarsky (Rocco), Eleanor Steber (Marcelline), Joseph Laderoute (Jacquino), Chorus, NBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini. RCA Victor set LM-6025, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲EXACTLY what RCA Victor's capable engineering department did to this broadcast performance of December 1944, I cannot say, but the results of their efforts has a realism that suggests a modern production. Unquestionably, some reverberation was added to give more of a concert-hall atmosphere, which is especially effective with the voices. While the overall orchestra is made to sound better than it did in the NBC studio, some of the wooden quality associated with that studio is noticeable in the bass,

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especially in the strings, which retained little reverberation in the first place and therefore could not be improved upon. Having heard recently the HMV performance of *Fidelio*, (see October issue), made in Vienna with Furtwaengler at the orchestral helm, I could have wished that this production had the latter's overall richness in sound and also that Toscanini had had access to some of its singers. The present performance *does not* boast a better cast than the HMV set though, like the latter, I doubt that a better cast could have been assembled back in 1944 in this country. What a pity that Lotte Lehmann was past her prime, for she and Toscanini in the 1930s joined forces at Salzburg to give one of the most talked-of performances of *Fidelio* ever staged in modern times. There were rumors that it was recorded, but they unfortunately proved unfounded.

Comparative Values

The choice of performances can be governed by either the character and quality of the singers or by the performance of the conductors. Both Toscanini and Furtwaengler truly perform this music in the manner of one dedicated. To say that one is more stirring than the other depends upon one's attitude of mind, for musically and dramatically both are compelling and the personality of neither man is forgotten at any time during either performance. Toscanini's performance is more intensified and some of his tempi are more urgent than Furtwaengler's. I think the spotlight hovers more on Toscanini than on the German, especially is this apparent in the ensembles which both men control and balance with masterful competence. There is often more warmth in Furtwaengler's treatment of the music, and I think that he does wonders with the Introduction to Act 2, giving "a marvelous and spine-chilling interpretation," as Alec Robertson said in *The Gramophone*. Both conductors give fine performances of the *Leonore No. 3 Overture* which divides the scenes of Act 2, but Furtwaengler makes his performance emotionally more urgent than Toscanini, who stresses the drama more. After the

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Introduction to Act 2, Windgassen is more effective in catching the mood than is Peerce, though the latter is appreciable for his fine musicality.

At the opening of the opera, Rudolf Schock and Sena Jurinac are more perfectly matched than Eleanor Steber and Joseph Laderoute. Jurinac is the finer Marcelline. Neither Otto Edelmann nor Herbert Janssen are convincing villains; they lack real sinisteress. Gottlob Frick's Rocco is better sung than Belarsky's, though the latter gives as fine a performance as any of the men in the present set. It remains to speak of the two Leonores—Martha Moedl and Rose Bampton. The latter's voice is consistently steadier and tonally better centered than the former's. Though she is dramatically convincing, it is Moedl, who while obviously not in best form when the HMV recording was made, nonetheless often acts more tellingly with her voice. Bampton, on the other hand, was definitely in top form when she sang this performance. That her high tones lack coloration reminds us that she, like Moedl, was once a mezzo-soprano.

I am reminded that the choice of the Victor and HMV performances can be motivated by something else besides singers and conductors—the matter of dollars and cents. The present set takes only two discs, costing \$5.95 each, while the HMV set takes three discs, costing \$6.95 each. Moreover, the HMV set has no libretto while the Victor one has complete libretto in German and English, as well as a fine commentary by Marcia Davenport.

—P.H.R.

BELLINI: *Norma* (Opera in 2 Acts); Maria Meneghini Callas (Norma), Mario Filippeschi (Pollione), Ebe Stignani (Adalgiso), Nicola Rossi-Lemeni (Oroveso), Paolo Caroli (Flavio), Rina Cavallari (Clotilda), Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Tullio Serafin. Angel set 3517C, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲MARIA Callas has acquired quite a reputation for her *Norma* in Europe.

She is by way of being a personality singer, recalling Rosa Raisa of old. Like Raisa, she commands the spotlight when on stage with her dramatic projection and her telling emotionalism. In England, critics who heard her in person, said that her voice was more impressive in the theatre than on records. So was Raisa's voice. In voices like these, which are more than amply endowed, the high tones have a thrilling quality in the theatre that is not completely caught or conveyed in recording. Remembering Ponselle, with her velvet beauty, and Milanov, with her lovely quality when at her best, one could wish for more beauty of tone which is apparently not Callas' to command. But she brings something else to her portrayal of Norma, a greater personal feeling for the drama in the text and a commanding nobility as well as musicality which make her as much a queen as any Norma I have ever heard. Hers is a truly compelling Norma; she is a true Priestess of characteristic strength and passionate intensity. It is unfortunate for a great singer that Bellini had to give her his best at the beginning of the opera in her famous aria, *Casta diva*. Callas sings this aria expressively, transposing it down a half key as many sopranos do. In this aria, much of the beauty of her voice is manifest but, truth to tell, her voice is not tonally as consistently expressive in this opera as it was in *Lucia* and *I Puritani*.

Norma is an ungrateful opera, in which only Adalgisa fares as well as the heroine and then only in the duets. The tenor part has never been one that stood out in relief from that of the two principal women. Though Adalgisa is often sung by a contralto or mezzo, Bellini actually wrote the part for a soprano. Ebe Stignani has the range to cope successfully with the role, and she sings still impressively, if not always with the tonal radiance that she commanded 15 years ago when she sang with Gina Cigna in the old Parlophone release. I have never heard a satisfactory tenor in the role of Pollione. It is not a grateful part and Bellini devised a grueling high tessitura probably to make it heroic. Filip-

peschi is as satisfactory as most I have heard, singing for the most part with artistic competence if not with modulated expression, except when unduly pressing his high voice. Rossi-Lemeni, as Oroveso, does not compare to Tancredi Passero in the older set. His voice is beset with an unpleasant vibrato and often a smothered projection of the text. The secondary roles are well sung.

This is Callas' show, as indeed most of those operas in which she has appeared on records have been. She is a more convincing Norma than Cigna, whose unsteady singing and piercing tones were often unpleasant.

Next to Callas, Tullio Serafin is the strongest artistic personality. One almost feels that he earns a spotlight in the orchestral pit, for his musical direction is commanding without being imperious, especially in the ensemble scenes. La Scala's famous orchestra and chorus do justice to the occasion. The recording sound is excellent. —P.H.R.

FALLA: *La Vida Breve*; Victoria de los Angeles and other artists. **SPANISH SONGS;** Miss de los Angeles. RCA Victor set LM-6017, two discs, \$11.90.

▲THIS is the same recording that was put out by HMV and reviewed in our October issue (page 49), with the exception of an alteration in the *Spanish Song Recital* on the fourth face. The Victor issue has a complete libretto in Spanish and English but only the briefest translations of the songs. HMV provides no libretto only a synopsis of the plot of the opera. Only five of the seven songs on the HMV disc are used here. One of those dropped was Respighi's *Stornellatrice*, albeit a misnomer in a Spanish recital, but sung so beautifully by Miss de los Angeles that it is missed. However, Victor has placed five other songs which appeared formerly on a 10" disc now withdrawn, in which the soprano is accompanied by harpsichord, played by Claude Chasson. They are all lovely songs and few would complain of the loss of two others from the HMV issue con-

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sidering the bounty of the present recital. Yet, switching from the harpsichord of Mr. Chiasson suddenly to the piano of Gerald Moore rather changes one's viewpoint, for Mr. Moore and Miss de los Angeles make an ideal team. Victor's reproduction is brighter and more tense on the top than HMV's which is not always to the good of the high tones of the artists, and there is none of the rich bass quality here that exists in the HMV discs. The choice will not be a difficult one for most listeners, but the discriminating listener may well be drawn to the HMV release. I might mention that he can get a libretto through any leading music shop. But, of course, he will have to pay considerably more for the HMV records plus libretto. —P.H.R.

■
TCHAIKOVSKY: *Mazeppa* (Opera in 3 Acts); Alexei Ivanov (Mazeppa), Nina Pokrovskaya (Maria), Ivan Petrov (Kochubei), Vera Davidova (Luibov), Georgi Bolshakov (Andrei), others, Chorus and Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre conducted by Vassily Nebolsin, and Band of the Bolshoi Theatre conducted by Y. K. Lukovnikov. Concert Hall Society set 1310, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲ALTHOUGH Tchaikovsky confessed to Mme. von Meck that he did not "feel particularly attracted by the characters" in the libretto of his seventh opera, "still I am writing and already have achieved something." However, after composing a few scenes, he was so satisfied that they "changed his attitude towards this opera." Tchaikovsky, who was never in the true sense of the word a nationalist composer, tackled in *Mazeppa* a work that should have been composed by Moussorgsky or Borodin. As Edwin Evans, in his book on the composer, says: "The only point at which the Russian element is successfully used is at the symphonic *entr'acte* entitled *The Battle of Pollava*," which "is based mainly on folksongs." The prefatory notes before the translated libretto strive to build up the opera by emphasizing that it is the third most popular Tchaikovsky opera in Russia today. The music is well made, full

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of melodic inventiveness, but without the great arias of Tchaikovsky's best operas—*Engene Onegin* and *Pique Dame*. The orchestral writing is fluent and full of coloration, for Tchaikovsky knew how to handle an orchestra. The libretto devised by the poet Burenin from Puskin's epic poem *Pollava* does not have the epic sweep of the poem. The plot concerns the feud between Mazeppa and Kochubei over the latter's refusal to give his daughter Maria in marriage to the former who, while the headman of the village, is too old. Mazeppa, notwithstanding his position in Kochubei's home, elopes with her. Though the wrongdoer, Mazeppa has Kochubei thrown in jail and executed. In the last act, Maria returns to Mazeppa bereft of reason, having seen her father and mother both dead.

The performance of the famous Bolshoi Opera is a highly competent one though the singing is not always on a high plane. Ivanov is a fine baritone, and Pokrovskaya is a brilliant soprano, while the tenor, Bolshakov, has a somewhat metallic voice. The recording is unusually good for Russian tape but requires a higher tonal boost than domestic issues. —J.N.

■
VIVES: *Dona Francisquita*; Maria de los Angeles Morales (Francisquita), Ana Maria Iriarte (Aurora), Maria Dolores Garcia (Dona Francisca), Angelita Calvo (La Buhonera), Fernando (Carlos Munguia), Julio Uribe (Cardona), José Maria Maiza (Don Matias), and others, with Chorus and Grand Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ataulfo Argenta. London TW-91005, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲THE FIRST of London's projected series of *zarzuelas*, made in Spain, is by the gifted Amadeo Vives (1871-1932). Written in 1923, this work is regarded as a modern classic in Spain, and is as popular in South America as in the homeland. The story is set in Madrid in Carnival time which gave Vives an opportunity to keep the music colorful and lively. The plot is of the slimmest. An old widower, Don Matias, seeks the hand of Francisquita while her mother

(Continued on page 120)



Paul Paray, Conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra

RECORD COLLECTORS

are talking about . . .

. . . **Paul Paray**, who has long been recognized as one of "the most powerful conducting personalities in the France of today." Taking over the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, which was badly in need of rehabilitation, the noted French musician within a short time veritably recreated a second-rate organization into one of the front line orchestras of this country. For more than 20 years, music listeners "in the know" have spoken of Paul Paray as one of the great conductors of our time. Discerning listeners, returning from France, spoke of Paray's splendid work with the famous *Colonne Concerts* orchestra at Paris, which he conducted from 1932 to 1952. American first heard Paray in 1939 when he created a sensation conducting the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra in its summer session at Lewisohn Stadium in New York. The intervention of the war prevented Paray from again returning to our shores, where he had several tempting offers. During the Nazi occupation of France, he continued to distinguish himself as a musician as much as a resistance patriot. Paul Paray was born in Le Tréport in May 1886. He studied at the famous Paris Conservatory, winning the coveted *Prix de Rome* with his cantata *Janitzka*. After serving in combat duty in World War I, where he was taken prisoner by the Germans, he became associate conductor of the *Concerts Lamoureux* in Paris in 1921, and in 1928 was appointed that orchestra's first conductor and president. Rhythmic fluency is the keynote of his musical artistry, in which he often reveals a refreshingly individual feeling for its lilt. His is an irresistible compulsion in dramatic music and a gratifying delicacy and finesse in lyric compositions. One concurs with one of his countrymen, who said that "he has authority, clarity of vision, strength of will and bigness of scope. . . He knows what he wants, and he knows how to get what he wants." Long opposed to recording, based on earlier experiences in France where, he contends, recording engineers distorted his intentions, it was not until he heard some of Mercury's so-called "Living Presence" recordings that he consented to undertake a long-term program for that company with the Detroit Symphony.

. . . **the deletion** of countless valued 78 rpm recordings from the catalogue of **His Master's Voice** in England. The list is truly enormous, including the famous Archive Series, the equally famous Society Editions and other recordings in every field of music. This seemingly drastic move is as much a commentary on the acceptance of LP as it is a reminder that big record companies have in recent years acquired unwieldy catalogues. The move actually was motivated by a necessary reduction of the HMV catalogue which, over the years, has grown into voluminous proportions, the latest having attained the unprecedented volume of 623 pages, which has had to be printed in far too small a type face. Many of these recordings are destined to become rarities which, no doubt, will bring fabulous prices in the future. Undoubtedly, HMV from time to time will defer to the wishes of the modern generation of listeners as well as those of the future with an occasional sampling of the 78-rpm rarities to LP, in the same manner as RCA Victor has done in its "Treasury" series. Readers interested in a catalogue of the HMV deletions can obtain one free of charge from its agent—Addison Foster, 1226 Montgomery Ave., Narberth, Pa.

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(Continued from page 117)

is present, thinking at first that he is proposing to the older woman. When she realizes that it is she that he courts, she employs the motive of jealousy to attract his student son Fernando (even to the use of the old gag of a dropped-handkerchief). Fernando has been in love with the actress Aurora but Francisquita wins him from her.

The recording omits the dialogue and only a printed synopsis is provided, which is not too helpful in following the story. The dialogue where Matias proposes is cut and so is some of his music. The performance has the verve characteristic of singers and chorus who have been long associated with the work on stage, and the singing is typical of Spanish zarzuela artists—uneven. The best of the women is Iriarte, who has style and a fine voice. The part of Francisquita is sung by a soprano with pleasing middle voice but shrill and white in her top register which makes her coloratura singing rather unpleasant to the ear. The tenor is agreeable but not very romantic, and the balance of the cast are competent. The choral singing is good but heavy-bodied and the orchestral playing under the knowing direction of Ataúlfo Argenta is expressive except for a few rough spots. The recording is generally first-rate.

—J.N.

DONIZETTI: *Excerpts from Lucia—Lucia perdone—Sulla tomba* (Act 1); Mado Robin and Libero de Luca; *Mad Scene*; Mado Robin. **GOUNOD:** *Excerpts from Mireille—Vincenette a votre age; O légère hirondelle* (Act 1); *Tahir Vincent—Mon coeur ne peut changer* (Act 2); *Heureux petit berger; Ah! parle encore—Prière* (Act 4); Mado Robin, with Michel Malkassian and André Gabriel in duets, and Paris Conservatory Concerts Orchestra conducted by Richard Blareau. London LL-922, \$5.95.

BIZET: *Excerpts from Les Pecheurs de Perles—C'est toi—Au fond du temple saint* (Act 1); Libero de Luca and Jean Borthayre; *Me voila seule—Comme autrefois; L'éila. . . Dieu puissant, le*

voila (Act 2); Janine Micheau with Libero de Luca in latter. **GOUNOD:** *Excerpts from Mireille—O légère hirondelle* (Act 1); *La brise est douce* (*Chanson de Magali*) (Act 2); Tahir Vincent—*Mon coeur ne peut changer* (Act 2); *Heureux petit berger; Voici la vaste plaine* (Act 4); Janine Micheau with Pierre Gianotti in duet, the Paris Conservatory Concerts Orchestra and the Paris Opera Orchestra, conducted by Alberto Erede. London LL939, \$5.95.

▲SOME listeners do not like complete operas—only the sugar plums from them; hence recorded excerpts have found favor. Well, each to his taste. For my part, I always enjoy arias and duets in their rightful context. One suspects that minor battles might be fought over two coloraturas, but I would not fight over these French ladies, who fail to efface memories of so many others. Micheau is the more gracious and consistently pleasing artist, but Robin soars heavenward sensationally though her voice gets bleached there by the sun. Libero de Luca authenticates his Italian name in *Lucia*, singing with appropriate vehemence in the duet but not always on pitch. Here, Robin is heard at her best. Her *Mad Scene* is sung with clarity and true pitch except in the duet with the flute. Her high tones may be phenomenal but they are not always pleasing, especially her final one. She is joined by a tenor in the duet from *Mireille*, who sings well but without subtlety. In the waltz song, she is less effective than Micheau, who has more elegance.

Micheau brings charm to her singing of the *Mireille* excerpts. In the duets, she has a competent but light-weight tenor and a pleasing second soprano. Her singing of the lovely *Heureux petit berger* is especially appealing. She seems completely at home in Gounod's opera. The excerpts from Bizet's *Les Pecheurs de Perles* are less impressive, for de Luca lacks the true romantic charm requisite to the tenor role. His duet with Borthayre, a fine baritone, is ineffective at the slow pace taken—it does not hold together, and in the final love Duet he lacks the refinement of Micheau. —J.N.

The American Record Guide

Critics' Choice of the Best LPs of 1954

HERE are our reviewers' selected best LP recordings of 1954. The list is far greater than our 1953 one because 1954 was truly a tidal year of worthwhile LP recordings, reaching the highest mark since LP's advent in 1948.

The present list extends through November; the reviewers' selected best from this issue will be published in January.

Since music has many facets and the world of LP knows countless artists, many new names prevail among composers as well as interpreters as indeed they should. For lesser composers, like lesser known artists, often achieve recognition because they, too, have an individuality that merits praise. The great privilege of the LP era is the vast riches it offers in musical works of all eras and in the artistry of all peoples. The more one explores the LP literature, the more true music listeners will discover an affinity with lesser composers as well as with great ones. The record world, for years too long surfeited with the music of the acclaimed masters, neglected the lesser men of music who often had something worthwhile to contribute.

As you look over this list, we hope that you will be stimulated to investigate unfamiliar composers as well as artists. Perhaps you will be interested to return to original reviews. (Reference to the month in which they appeared is given.) Where two recordings of a given work are included, the reader who does not have the original reviews on hand is enjoined to hear both and make his own decision on their relative merits.

For convenience the list has been arranged in different musical categories so that a prospective buyer who favors one type of music can make his selections accordingly. The greater majority of the recordings are first-rate examples of modern engineering which, with proper compensation, will give satisfaction. Those few that prove not to be were chosen because of outstanding artistic merits.

ORCHESTRA

ADAM: *Giselle* (Ballet); Paris Opera Orch. (Blareau). London LL-869. (Jan.).

ALBENIZ (trans. Arbos): *Iberia*; **TURINA:** *Danzas fantasticas*; Paris Conservatory Concerts Orch. (Argenta). London LL-921. (July).

BALLET: *Les Patineurs* (Meyerbeer); *Incredible Flutist* (Piston); Boston Pops (Fiedler). *Firebird Suite* (Stravinsky); Stokowski and Orch. *Daphnis et Chloe—Suite No. 2*; **WEBER:**

BERLIOZ: *Invitation to the Dance*; NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). **DELIBES:** *Sylvia* and *Coppelia* Boston Sym. Orch. (Monteux). *La Valse* (Ravel) *Bacchus et Ariane—Ballet Suite* (Roussel) Boston Sym. Orch. (Munch). Victor LM-6113. (Nov.).

BARTOK: *Concerto for Orchestra*; Philharmonia Orch. (von Karajan). Angel 350003. (Feb.).

BARTOK: *Concerto No. 3 for Piano* **PROKOFIEV:** *Concerto No. 3, Op. 26* Katchen, Swiss Romande Orch. (Ansermet). London LL-945. (May). **BARTOK:** *Sonata for Solo Violin*; **BERG:** *Violin Concerto*; Gertler, Philharmonia Orch. (Kletzki). Angel 35091. (July). **BARTOK:** *Suite from Miraculous Mandarin*; **KODALY:** *Peacock Variations*; Chicago Sym. Orch. (Dorati). Mercury MG-50038. (Sept.).

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 3, Op. 37*; Serkin (piano), Philadelphia Orch. (Ormandy). Columbia ML-4738. (Jan.). **BEETHOVEN:** *Concerto No. 5, Op. 73 (Bemperor)*; Backhaus (piano), Vienna Phil. Orch. (Krauss). London LL-379. (March). **BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 3, Op. 55 (Eroica)*; Philharmonia Orch. (von Karajan). Angel 35000. (March). **BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 4, Op. 60*; Concertgebouw Orch. (Krips). London LL-915. (June). **BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 6, Op. 68 (Pastorale)*; Concertgebouw Orch. (Kleiber). London LL-916. (May).

BRAHMS: *Concerto No. 1 in D mi., Op. 15*; Curzon (piano), Concertgebouw Orch. (van Beinum). London LL-850. (Jan.). **BRAHMS:** *Concerto in D, Op. 77*; Milstein (violin), Pittsburgh Sym. Orch. (Steinberg). Capitol P-8271. (Sept.). **BRAHMS:** *Four Symphonies; Variations on a Theme of Haydn; Academic Festival and Tragic Overtures; Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 3, 10, 17*; Bruno Walter, Phil. Sym. Orch. of N. Y. Columbia SL-200. (Nov.).

BRITTEN: *Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia* from *Peter Grimes*; Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra; Concertgebouw Orch. (van Beinum). London LL-917. (April).

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 4 (Romantic)*; Hague Phil. Orch. (Van Otterloo); **MAHLER:** *Kindertotenlieder*; Herman Schoey (baritone), same orch. Epic SC-6001. (August)

CRESTON: *Symphony No. 2, Op. 35*; *Symphony No. 3, Op. 48*; Natl. Sym. Orch. (Mitchell). Westminster WL-5272. (July).

CHOPIN: *Concerto No. 1, Op. 11*; Rubinstein, Los Angeles Phil. Orch. (Wallenstein). RCA Victor LM-1810. (Oct.).

- CORELLI:** *Concerti Grossi, Op. 6*; Societa Corelli. RCA Victor LM-1776. (Febr.).
- DEBUSSY:** *La Mer*; **RAVEL:** *Rapsodie Espagnole*; Philharmonia Orch. (von Karajan). Angel 35081. (July). **DEBUSSY:** *Jeux—Poeme danse*; *Six Epigraphes antiques*; Swiss Romande Orch. (Ansermet). London LL-992. (August). **DEBUSSY:** *Trois Nocturnes*; *L'Apres midi d'un Faune*; *Marche Ecossaise*; French Natl. Radio Orch. (Engelbrecht). (Nov.).
- DELIUS:** *Paris*; *In a Summer Garden*; *Summer Night on the Rver*; London Sym. Orch. (Collins). (July).
- DVORAK:** *Symphony No. 5, Op. 95*; NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). RCA Victor LM-1778. (May).
- ENESCO:** *Roumanian Rhapsodies Nos. 1 & 2*; Stokowski & his Orch. RCA Victor 10" LRM-7043. (Febr.).
- FAURE:** *Ballade, Op. 19*; **FRANCAIX:** *Concertino for Piano & Orch.*; *Nocturnes, Op. 33, Op. 84, Op. 37, Op. 74*; Kathleen Long (piano). London Phil. Orch. (Martinon). London LL-1058. (Dec.).
- FRANCK:** *Symphony in D mi.*; Vienna Phil. Orch. (Furtwaengler). London LL-967. (June).
- FRANCK:** *Symphonic Variations*; **INDY:** *Symphony on a Mountain Air*; Aldo Ciccolini (piano), Paris Cons. Concerts Orch. (Cluytens). (Oct.).
- GEMINIANI:** *Six Concerti Grossi, Op. 3*; Barchet Quartet, Pro Musica String Orch. Stuttgart (Reinhardt). (May).
- GRIEG:** *Incidental Music to Peer Gynt, Op. 23*; Soloists, Oslo Phil. Orch. (Gruener-Hegge) Mercury MG-10148. (May).
- HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 96*; *Symphony No. 97*; Concertgebouw Orch. (van Beinum). London LL-854. (March). *Symphony No. 44 (Trauer)*; *Symphony No. 48 (Maria Terese)*; Danish State Sym. Orch. (Woldike). (March).
- HINDEMITH:** *Mathis der Maler*; *Concert Music for Strings and Brass, Op. 50*; Phila. Orch. (Ormandy). Columbia ML-4816. (March).
- HOLST:** *The Planets*; Philharmonic Prom. Orch. (Boult). Westminster WL-5235. (Febr.).
- INDY:** *Symphony on a Mountain Air*. (see Franck: *Symphonic Variations*). **INDY:** *Symphony on Mountain Air*; **SAINT-SAENS:** *Concerto No. 5, Op. 103*; Jacquinot (piano), Westminster Sym. Orch. of London (Fistoulari). MGM-E-3063. (Febr.).
- KODALY:** *Peacock Variations* (see Bartok—Suite).
- LAMBERT:** *Concerto for Piano & 9 Players*; **LORD BERNERS:** *Piano Works*; Pressler, Cham. Ensemble (Bloomfield). MGM-E-3081. (April).
- LISZT:** *Dante Symphony*; Colonne Assoc. of Concerts Orch. (Sebastian). Urania 7103. (Jan.). **LISZT:** *Les Preludes*; *Orpheus*; *Battle of the Huns*; *Maseppa*; London Phil. Sym. Orch. (Dixon). Westminster WL-5269. (July).
- MARTIN:** *Concerto for Harpsichord & Orch.*; Nef, Oiseau-Lyre Orch. (Froment). Oiseau-Lyre 10" 53001. (Aug.).
- MENDELSSOHN:** *Violin Concerto in E mi.*; **BRUCH:** *Violin Concerto No. 1*; Milstein' Pittsburgh Sym. Orch. (Steinberg). Capitol P-8243. (March). **MENDELSSOHN:** *Symphony No. 3 (Scotch)*; *Symphony No. 5 (Reformation)*; Phil. Sym. Orch. (Mitropoulos). Columbia ML-4834. (April).
- MOUSSORGSKY-RAVEL:** *Pictures at an Exhibition*; **FRANCK:** *Psyche et Eros*, NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). RCA Victor LM-1838. (Oct.).
- MOZART:** *Concerto No. 11, K. 413* *Concerto No. 22, K. 482* Rivkin (piano), Vienna State Opera Orch. (Dixon). Westminster WL-5244. (April). **MOZART:** *Concerto for Flute & Harp, K. 299*; *Adagio & Rondo for Glass Harmonica, Flute, Oboe, Viola & Cello, K. 617*; *Andante for Flute and Orch., K. 315*; Wanaussek (flute), Jellinek (harp), & others, Pro Musica Cham. Orch., Vienna. Vox PL-8550. (June). **MOZART:** *Concerto No. 12, K. 414*; *Concerto No. 18, K. 456*; Kraus (piano), Boston Sym. Orch. (Monteux). RCA Victor LM-1783. (June). **MOZART:** *Diverimento in D, K. 334*; Vienna State Opera Orch. (Prohaska). Vanguard 441. (March).
- MUSIC OF MODERN NORWAY:** *Rondo Amorofo, Op. 14, No. 7*; *Goldsblatten, Op. 20*; *Sinfonia Dolorosa, Op. 19 (Saeverud)*; *The Cemetery by the Sea, Op. 20*; *Micheangelo Sonnet, Op. 17, No. 1*; *The Silent Island, Op. 21 (Valen)*; Oslo Phil. Orch. (Fjeldstad). Mercury MG-10149. (May).
- NEW YEAR CONCERT—1954:** *Radetzky March (Joh. Strauss, I)*; *The Blue Danube*; *At Home*; *Annen Polka (Joh. Strauss, II)*; *On Vacation*; *Music of the Spheres*; *ChatterBox (Josef Strauss)*; Vienna Phil. Orch. (Krauss). London LL-970. (July).
- PIJPER:** *Symphony No. 3*; **DIEPENBROCK:** *Marsyas—Prelude & Entr'acte*; Concertgebouw Orch. (van Beinum). (April).
- PROKOFIEV:** *Chou—Ballet Suite*; **FALLA:** *Dances from The Three-Cornered Hat*; St. Louis Sym. Orch. (Golschmann). Capitol P-8247. **PROKOFIEV:** *Concerto No. 3* (see Bartok).
- RACHMANINOFF:** *Concerto No. 2, Op. 18*; *Preludes from Op. 23 & Op. 32*; Andra (piano), Philharmonia Orch. (Galliera). Angel 35093. (July).
- ROSSINI:** *Overtures to William Tell & Semiramide*; NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). RCA Victor 10" LRM-7054. (July).
- RAVEL:** *Rapsodie: Espagnole* (see Debussy).
- RIMSKY-KORSAKOV:** *Suites from Le Coq d'or & Tsar Sultan*; Philharmonia Orch. (Dobrowen). Angel 35010. (Jan.). **RIMSKY-KORSAKOV:** *Russian Easter Overture*; *Anwar—Symphonic Suite*; Detroit Sym. Orch. (Paray). Mercury MG-50028. (Sept.).
- SCHUBERT:** *Symphony No. 9 in C*; NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). Victor LM-1835.
- SCHUMANN:** *Concerto for Cello, Op. 129*; *Ei-coreas*; Casals, Prades Fest. Orch. & Perpignan Fest. Orch. & Istomin (piano). (Nov.). **SCHUMANN:** *Symphony No. 4, Op. 120*; **LISZT:**

Les Preludes; Detroit Sym. Orch. (Paray). Mercury MG-500036.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Symphony No. 5, Op. 47*; Phil. Sym. Orch. of N. Y. (Mitropoulos). Columbia ML-4739. (Febr.). **SAME**; St. Louis Sym. Orch. (Golschmann). Capitol P-8268. (Sept.).

SIBELIUS: *Violin Concerto, Op. 47*; Ginette Neveu, Philharmonia Orch. (Susskind). Angel 35129. (Oct.). **SIBELIUS**: *Symphony No. 4, Op. 63*; *Tapioala, Op. 112*; Philharmonia Orch. (von Karajan). Angel 35082. (July). **SIBELIUS**: *Symphony No. 5, Op. 82*; Philharmonia Orch. (von Karajan). Angel 35002.

STRAUSS, Joh.: (see *New Year Concert—1954*). **STRAUSS-DORATI**: *Graduation Ball*; New Sym. Orch. (Fistoulari). London LL-883. (Jan.).

STRAUSS, R.: *Also Sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30*; Chicago Sym. Orch. (Reiner). (Oct.). **STRAUSS, R.**: *Aus Italien, Op. 16*; Vienna Phil. Orch. (Krauss). (July). **STRAUSS, R.**: *Don Quixote, Op. 35*; P. Fournier (cello), E. Moraweg (viola), Philharmonia Orch. (Krauss). London LL-855.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Concerto No. 1, Op. 23*; Andra (piano), Philharmonia Orch. (Galliera). Angel 35083. (August). **TCHAIKOVSKY**: *The Nutcracker, Op. 71*; Minneapolis Sym. Orch. (Dorati). Mercury OL-2-101. (June). **TCHAIKOVSKY**: *Symphony No. 6, Op. 74 (Pathetique)*; Pittsburgh Sym. Orch. (Steinberg). Capitol P-8272. (Oct.).

TOSCANINI Conducts Wagner (see Wagner). **TURINA**: *Danzas fantasticas* (see Albeniz).

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS—Seven *Symphonies* of; London Phil. Orch., soloists (Boult). London set. (August). **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**: *Fantasia on a Theme of Tallis*; Norfolk Rhapsody; *English Folk Song Suite*; Philharmonic Prom. Orch. (Boult). Westminster WL-5270. (Aug.).

WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolde—Prelude and Love Death*; *Goetterdaemmerung—Prologue & Siegfried's Rhine Journey*; *Siegfried's Funeral Music*; *Meistersinger—Preludes to Acts 1 & 3*; *Lohengrin—Preludes to Acts 1 & 3*; *Parsifal Prelude & Good Friday Spell*; NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). RCA Victor LM-6020. (Oct.).

WALTON: *Symphony (1934)*; Philharmonia Orch. (Walton). RCA Victor LHMV-1041. (May).

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: *Unaccompanied Cello Suites Nos. 1 & 4*; Janos Starker. Period 582. (June).

BEETHOVEN: *Quartets, Op. 127, 130, 131, 132, 135 & Grosse Fuge, Op. 133*; Vegh Quartet. (Sept.).

BERKELEY: *String Trio*; **DOHNANYI**: *Serenade, Op. 10*; **FRANCAIX**: *String Trio in C*; Pougnet, Riddle, Pini. Westminster WL-5316. (Oct.).

BRAHMS: *Cello Sonatas, Op. 38 & Op. 99*; Straker & Bogin. Period 593. (May). **BRAHMS**: *Sonatas, Op. 120, Nos. 1 & 2*; Wlach (clarinet) & Demus (piano). Westminster WL-5236.

(Jan.). **BRAHMS**: *Violin Sonatas, Op. 78, 100, 108*; **DIETRICH-SCHUMANN-BRAHMS**: *Sonata*; Stern & Zakin. (Nov.). **BRAHMS**: *Trio in E, Op. 8*, Fournier, Janigro, Badura Skoda. Westminster WL-5237. (Jan.).

CRESTON: *Quartet, Op. 8*, **TURINA**: *La Oracion del Torero*; **WOLF**: *Italian Serenade*; Hollywood String Qt. Capitol P-8260. (July).

DOHNANYI: *Serenade* (see *Berkeley*).

DVORAK: *Piano Quintet in A, Op. 81*; Curtzon. Budapest String Qt. Columbia ML-4825. (Aug.).

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LUTE TRIOS; Tryesoonne (violin), Podolski (lute), Terby (cello). Period 587. (May).

FRANCAIX: *String Trio* (see *Berkeley*).

HAYDN: *Six Quartets, Op. 76*; Schneider Qt. Haydn Society HSQ-34/35/36. (Febr.). **HAYDN**: *Piano Trios, Nos. 4, 17, 27, 29*; Badura Skoda, Fournier, Janigro. Westminster WL-5293. **HAYDN**: *String Trios, Op. 53*; **WILTON**: *String Trios Nos. 1, 3, 6*; Pougnet, Riddle, Pini. Westminster WL-5296. (Sept.).

HINDEMITH: *Kleine Kammermusik, Op. 24, No. 2*; **POULENC**: *Sextet for Piano & Winds*; The Fine Arts Players with Lurie (piano). Capitol P-8258. (July).

KODALY: *Quartet No. 2, Op. 10*; **SMETANA**: *Quartet No. 1 (Aus meinen Leben)*; Vegh Qt. London LL-865. (June).

KREISLER: *Quartet in A mi.*; **PAGANINI**: *Quartet in B*; Stuyvesant String Qt. Philharmonia 107. (April).

MOZART: *Quintet in E flat, K. 452*, **BEETHOVEN**: *Quintet in B flat, Op. 16*; Serkin (piano). Members of the Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet. Columbia ML-4834. (April).

MOZART: *Trios in G, K. 496, in E flat, K. 502*. Westminster WL-5242. (March). *Trios in G, K. 564; in E flat, K. 254*. Westminster WL-5284. (Sept.). Badura Skoda, Fournier, Janigro.

RECORDER MUSIC OF THE 18th CENTURY: *Quartettino (A. Scarlatti)*; *Sonata in G mi.* (Loellet); *Concerto from Church Cantata 152* (Bach); *Trio Sonata in C mi. & Quartet in G* (Telemann); L. Davenport (recorder), Tryon (violin), Schuster (oboe), P. Davenport (harpischord), Neal (cello). Classic 1051. (Sept.).

SCHOENBERG: *String Quartets Nos. 1, 2, 3 & 4*; **WEBERN**: *Five Movements for String Quartet*; **BERG**: *String Quartet No. 3*; Julliard String Qt. Columbia SL-188. (Jan.).

16th & 17th CENTURY LUTE MUSIC; Michael Podolski. Period 577. (March).

SCHUBERT: *Quartets in A mi., Op. 29, in D minor (Death & the Maiden), in G, Op. 161*; Budapest String Qt. Columbia ML-4831, 2, 3. (May).

AN EVENING WITH SEGOVIA: *Aria & Corrente* (Frescobaldi-Segovia); *Capriccio diabolico* (Castelnovo-Tedesco); *Six Preludes* (Ponce); *Minuet* (Rameau-Segovia); *Caratina—Suite* (Tansman); *Nocturno* (Torroba). Decca DL-9733. (Oct.).

SMETANA: *Quartet No. 1* (see *Kodaly*).

December, 1954

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KEYBOARD

- BACH:** *Art of the Fugue*; Josef & Grete Dichler (duo-pianos). Westminster WAL-215. (Nov.)
- BACH:** *Orgelbüchlein* (Little Organ Book); Finn Videro. Haydn Soc. 83. (Febr.). **BACH:** *The Well-Tempered Clavier*; Rosalyn Tureck (piano). Decca sets DS-127 & 128. (Jan.).
- BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata No. 8, Op. 13 (Pathétique)*; *Sonata No. 14, Op. 27, No. 2 (Moonlight)*. Angel 35025. *Sonata No. 23, Op. 57, (Appassionata)*; *Sonata No. 21, Op. 53 (Waldstein)*. Angel 35024. Gieseking. (Jan.) **BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata No. 21, Op. 53 (Waldstein)*; *Sonata No. 23, Op. 57 (Appassionata)*; Gorodnitzki, Capitol P-8264. (July).
- BRAHMS:** *Capriccio, Op. 76, No. 2; Rhapsodies, Op. 79, Nos. 1 & 2; Intermezzi, Op. 117, Nos. 2 & 3; Intermezzi, Op. 118, Nos. 2 & 6, Intermezzi, Op. 119, Nos. 2 & 3, Rhapsody, Op. 119, No. 4; Rubinstein. RCA Victor LM-1787. (June). **BRAHMS:** *Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35; Variations & Fugue on a Theme of Handel, Op. 24; Gorodnitzki. Capitol P-8227. (Febr.). **BRAHMS:** *Same Variations; Abbey Simon. Epic LC-3050. (Sept.). **BRAHMS:** *Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35; SCHUMANN:* *Etudes Symphoniques; And. Angel 35046. (April).****
- CHOPIN:** *Sonata No. 2, Op. 35; Fantasy, Op. 49; Baccarolle, Op. 60; Yves Nat. Haydn Soc. 97. (July).*
- DEBUSSY:** *15 Piano Pieces; Gieseking. Angel 35066. (June).* *Images (Books I & II); Pour le piano; Estampes; Gieseking. Angel 35065. (July).*
- FRANCK:** *Trois Chorales; Prelude, Fugue & Variations; Noehren (organ). Audiphile AP-4 & 5. (May).*
- JANACEK:** *On an Overgrown Path; Sonata (1905); In the Threshing House; Firkusny. Columbia ML-4740. (March).*
- KAPEL, Wm., IN MEMORIAM:** *Partita No. 4 (BACH); Laendler Nos. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16 & Improvisation in A flat (Schubert); Mephisto Waltz & Hungarian Rhapsody No. 11 (Liszt). RCA Victor LM-1791. (May).*
- MENDELSSOHN:** *Songs without Words (Vols. 2 & 3); Ginette Doyen. Westminster WL-5246 & 5279. (June).*
- MOUSSORGSKY:** *Pictures at an Exhibition; Pennario. Capitol 10" LAI-8266. (Sept.).*
- MOZART:** *Sonata No. 14, K. 457; Sonata No. 15, K. 545; SCHUMANN: Carnival, Op. 9; Gieseking. Columbia ML-4772. (Jan.).*
- MUSIC FOR 2 PIANOS:** *Concerto for 2 Solo Pianos (1935) (Stravinsky); Sonata for Piano 4 Hands (1938) (Hindemith); Suite Champetre (Rietti). Columbia ML-4853. Concertino d'Autonne (1951) for 2 Pianos & 8 Instruments (Milhaud); En habit de cheval (Satie); Sonata for Piano 4 Hands (1913) (Poulenc); Bipitaphes antiques (Debussy). Columbia ML-4854. Souvenirs, Op. 28 (1952) (Barber); Sonata for 2 Pianos (1945) (Haleff). Gold & Fitzgerald*

(duo-pianists), Saidenberg (conductor in Milhaud).

RAVEL: *Alborado del Gracioso; LISZT: Sonata del Petrucci No. 104; SCARLATTI: Sonatas, Longo 23 & 413; Lipatti. Columbia 10" ML-2216. (March).*

REUBKE: *Sonata in C mi. on 94th Psalm; LISZT: Fantasia & Fugue on B.A.C.H.; Gloria & Credo from an Organ Mass; Biggs (organ). Columbia ML-4820. (March).*

VOICE

- ANTHOLOGY OF RENAISSANCE MUSIC** by Dufay, Des Pres, Victoria, Palestrina, Van Berchem, Mouton, Lassus, Morley; Primavera Singers of the N. Y. Pro Musica Antiqua (Greenberg). Period 597. (July).
- BACH:** *Cantata No. 51; Aria from Cantata No. 208; Aria from Cantata No. 68; Schwartzkopf (soprano). Philharmonia Orch. (Gellhorn); Cantata No. 82; Hotter (baritone), same Orch. (Bernard). Columbia ML-4792. (Jan.).* **BACH:** *Mass in B minor; Schwarzkopf, Hoeffgen, Gedda, Relhus, Cho. & Orch. of Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna (von Karajan). Angel set 3500-C. (March).*
- BEETHOVEN:** *Fidelio; Poell, Edelmann, Windgassen, Moedl, Frick, Jurinac, others, Vienna State Opera Cho., Vienna Phil. Orch. (Furtwengler). HMV set ALP-1130/32. (Oct.).*
- BEETHOVEN:** *Miss Solemnis; Toscanini, NBC Sym. Orch., Soloists. RCA Victor set LM-6013. (April).*
- BELLINI:** *I Puritani; Callas, Di Stefano, Panneral, Rossi-Lemeni, others, Orch. & Cho. of La Scala, Milan (Serafin). Angel set 3502-C. (Jan.).*
- BERLIOZ:** *Lelio or The Return to Life, Op. 14b; Soloists, Cho. & Orch. of the New Paris Sym. Assn. (Leibowitz). Vox PL-8250. (Jan.).*
- BERLIOZ:** *The Damnation of Faust; Soloists, Boston Sym. Orch., Harvard Glee Club & Radcliff Choral Soc. (Munch). RCA Victor set LM-6614. (Oct.).*
- BRITTEN:** *A Ceremony of Carols; Copenhagen Boys Choir, Simon (harp) (Woldike). London 10" LD-9102. (June).*
- BUXTEHUDE:** *Two Solo Cantatas; Two Motets; Helen Boatwright (soprano), Choir of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, New Haven Conn. (Howard Boatwright). Overtone 6. (Sept.).*
- MARIA CEBOTARI SINGS SCENES** From *La Boheme & Madam Butterfly*; Maria Cebotari (soprano) with Peter Anders and Helge Roswaenge. Berlin Radio Sym. Orch. (Rother). Urania 7105. (March).
- CHARPENTIER:** *Magnificat in D; Offertory; Sub tuum praesidium, Plorans, ploravit, Regina caeli, Soloists, Chorale of Jeunes Musicales de France, Cham. Orch. of Concerts Padeloup (Louis-Martini). Haydn Soc. 102. (Sept.).*
- CHARPENTIER:** *Midnight Mass, VIVALDI: Gloria, Paris Vocal Ensemble, Orch. of the Soc. de Concerts. Westminster WL-5287. (Sept.).*
- CHANT GREGORIAN:** Choeurs des Moines de L'Abbaye St. Pierre de Solesmes. London

set LLA-14. (Jan.). **GREGORIAN CHANTS:** Vol. 3; Benedictine Monks of St. Wandrille de Fontenelle. Period 576. (Febr.).

CIMAROSA: *Il Maestro di Capella*, Corena (basso-buffa), Orch. dei Pomerig Musicali di Milano (Amaducci). London 10" LD-9118. (July).

DELIUS: *A Mass of Life*, Soloists, Choir, Royal Phil. Orch. (Beecham). Columbia SL-197.. (June).

DONIZETTI: *L'Elisir d'amore*; Carosio, Monti, Gobbi, Luise, Iello, Orch. & Cho of Rome Opera House (Santini). HMV 1067/68. (Aug.).

DONIZETTI: *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Callas, Di Stefano, Gobbi, Arie, others, Cho. & Orch. of Florence May Festival (Serafin). Angel 3503-B. (Febr.).

DVORAK: *Stabat Mater*; Op. 58; Soloists, Czech Singers Cho., Czech Phil. Orch. (Talich), Urania set 234. (July).

FALLA: *El Retablo de Maese Pedro*; *El Amor Brujo*; Soloists, Orch. de la Soc. des Concerts du Conservatoire (Argenta). Angel 35069. (Aug.). **FALLA:** *La Vida Breve*. de los Angeles, Gomez, Civil, others, Cho., Sym. Orch. of Barcelona Opera (Halfiter); *Seven Spanish Songs*; de los Angeles. HMV ALP-1150/51. (Sept.).

HUMPERDINCK: *Haensel und Gretel*; Metternich, von Illosway, Gruemmer, Schwarzkopf, others, Chorus, Philharmonia Orch. (von Karajan). Angel set 3506-B. (April).

LEHAR: *Das Land des Lachelns*; Angel set 3507-B. (April). *The Merry Widow*. Angel set 3501-B. (Febr.). Both casts: Schwarzkopf, Kunz, Gedda, Loose, others, Chorus & Philharmonia Orch. (Ackermann).

MASCAGNI: *Cavalleria Rusticana*; Callas, Caneli, Ticozzi, Di Stefano, Panerai, Orch. & Cho. La Scala (Serafin). Angel set 3509. **THE SAME:** Nicolai, Didier, Anelli, del Monaco, Protti, Sym. Orch. & Cho. (Mylan) (Ghione), with *Arias from Loreley (Catalani)*, *Il Tabarro (Puccini)*, *Andrea Chenier (Giordano)*, *La Fanciulla del West & La Boheme (Puccini)*; Mario del Monaco. London set LL-990/91.

MILANOV SINGS ARIAS from *La Forza del Destino*, *Aida*, *Il Trovatore (Verdi)*, *La Gioconda (Ponchielli)*. RCA Victor LM-1777.

MONTEVERDI: *Lagrime d'amante al sepolcro dell'amato*; **WEEKES:** *O care, thou wilt dispatch me; Hence care, thou art too cruel; A sparrow-hawk proud*; **GESUALDO:** *Dolcissima mia vita; Io pur respiro*; **BACH:** *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*; Collegium Musicum of Yale Univ. (Hindemith). (July). **MONTEVERDI:** *Vespro della Beata Vergine & Magnificat*. Ritchie, Lewis, Boyce, others, London Singers, Orch. (A. Lewis). Oiseau Lyre set 50021/22. (April).

MOZART: *Requiem*, K. 626; Laszlo, Roessler-Majdan, Munteanu, Ständen, Kammerchor, Vienna State Opera Orch. (Snerchen). Westminster WL-5233. (May).

ORFF: *Carmina Burana*, Troetschel, Braun, Kuen-Hoppe, Bavarian Radio Orch. & Cho. (E. Jochum). Decca DL-9706. (Jan.).

POULENC: *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*; Duval, Giraudeau, others, Cho. & Orch. Paris Opera Comique (Cluytens). Angel 35090. (June).

PUCCHINI: *Tosca*; Callas, Di Stefano, Gobbi, others, Orch. & Cho. of La Scala (De Sabata). Angel set 3508-B. (Jan.).

RAVEL: *L'Heure Espagnole*; Duval, Vieuille, Giraudeau, others, Orch. of Opera Comique (Cluytens). Angel 35018. (Jan.).

SABBATH IN THE SYNAGOGUE: *Friday Evening Service; Sabbath Morning Service*; Cantor Sholom Katz, Male Choir (Silbermintz). Westminster JMDS-5714. (Nov.).

SCARLATTI: *Passio D. N. Jesu Christi secundum Joannem*; Soloists, Choir of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, New Haven, Conn., Yale Univ. Orch., G. George (organ), H. Boatwright (conductor). Overtone 1. (May).

SCHOENBERG: *Gurre-Lieder*; Lewis, Gruber, Riley, Semser, others, Cho. & Orch. New Sym. Soc. of Paris (Leibowitz). Haydn Soc. set 100. (Febr.).

SCHWARZKOPF, Elisabeth—Schubert: *Recital*. Angel 35022. (Febr.). *Song Recital*. Angel 35023. (Oct.).

SEEFRIED, Irmgard, SINGS: *Weihnachtslieder (Cornelius); Ave Maria; Romance from Rosamunde and Seligkeit (Schubert); Maria Wiegendorf (Reger); Das schlafende Jesuskind (Wolf)*. Decca 10" DL-7545. (March).

STRAUSS: *Elektra—Highlights*; Goltz, Hoengen, Frantz, Bavarian State Orch. (Solti). Decca 9723. (Aug.). **STRAUSS:** *Four Last Songs; Capriccio—Closing Scene*; Schwarzkopf, Philharmonia Orch. (Ackermann). Angel 35084. (June). **STRAUSS:** *Four Last Songs; Arabella—Excerpts*; Della Casa, Vienna Phil. Orch. (Boehm). London LL-856. (April). **STRAUSS:** *Der Rosenkavalier*; Reining, Jurinac, Weber, Poell, Gueden, others, Vienna State Opera Chorus Vienna Phil. Orch. (Kleiber). London set LL-22. (Nov.). **STRAUSS:** *Salome*; Goltz Patzak Kenny, Braun, Dermota, Weber, others, Vienna Phil. Orch. (Krauss). London LL-1038/39. (Sept.).

STRAVINSKY: *Les Noces; Mass; Pater noster*; Soloists, N. Y. Concert Choir, N. Y. Concert Orch. (Hillis). Vox PL-8630. (Aug.). **STRAVINSKY:** *Pulcinella*; Soloists, Cleveland Orch. (Stravinsky). Columbia ML-4830. (April).

VERDI: *Falstaff*; Valdeno, Madasi, Guarrera, Carelli, Rossi, Scott, Nelli, Stich-Randall, Merri-man, Elmo, Shaw Chorale, NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). RCA Victor set LM-6111. (Oct.). **VERDI:** *Requiem*; Nelli, Barbieri, Di Stefano, Siepi, Shaw Chorale, NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). RCA Victor set LM-6018. (Nov.).

WAGNER: *Lohengrin*; Frick, Schock, Cunitz Metternich, Klose, others, Sym. Orch. & Cho. of Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunks, Hamburg (Schuechter). HMV set RLS-607. (Aug.).

WAGNER: *Lohengrin*; Rohr, Fehenberger Kupper, Franz, Braun, others, Bavarian Radio Orch. & Cho. (E. Jochum). Decca set D-131. (Febr.).

THEATER

ELLIOT: *Murder in the Cathedral*; Robert Donat and others. Angel 3505. (Jan.). **SHAKESPEARE:** *Hamlet*; Jon Gielgud and others. RCA Victor LM-6607. (Jan.). **WILDE:** *The Importance of Being Earnest*; John Gielgud, Pamela Brown, others. Angel 3504-B (Jan.).

Trends In Hi-Fi

(Continued from page 112)

the letter R is missing on any 1954 releases, acquired before subsequent matrices were imprinted with it, the buyer need not feel impelled to hunt out a later pressing. London stresses that the letter R is of most importance on their latest re-pressings of older releases, two of which we have been privileged to hear—Ansermet's performance of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* (LL-130) and Kleiber's version of Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* (LL-239). The latter repressings are reproductively finer than the original ones, which leads us to believe that all repressings have considerably bettered in the discs marked with the R.

Efforts to improve upon previously issued LP recordings are being pursued by other companies, most of which do not inform us of reproductive improvement in later repressings. Thus, RCA Victor in its later pressings of the Beethoven symphonies, performed by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony, has greatly improved on the quality of the first releases. The identification of the improved versions is also found after the matrix number and has to do with the letter "S" which appears after the matrix number, prefixed by a numeral. Any of the Beethoven symphonies from 9-S upwards in number are the improved recordings. As information relative to improvements in former LP releases comes our way we shall pass it on to our readers. —P.G.

Edward Vito Plays

HARP RECITAL: *Concerto for Harp and Strings* (arr. Vito from Mozart's

Piano Sonata in C, K. 545); *Concerto in B flat, Op. 4, No. 6* (Handel); Edward Vito (Harp), Daniel Guilet and Bernard Robbins (violins), Carleton Cooley (viola), Alan Shulman (cello), Philip Sklar (String bass); *Passacaglia from Harpsichord Suite No. 7* (Handel, arr. Vito); *Jeux d'eau* (Salzedo); *Arabesques Nos. 1 & 2* (Debussy, arr. Renie); *Prelude in C, Op. 12, No. 7* (Prokofiev); *Spanish Dance No. 1 from La Vida breve* (Falla, arr. Vito); Edward Vito (harp solos). Period SPL-704, \$5.95.

▲Edward Vito served as harpist with the NBC Symphony Orchestra of Arturo Toscanini from 1937, the year of the orchestra's organization. He is an elegant performer who can conjure tones that have the liquid purity of flowing water in a brook, an exquisite legato and poetic feeling. It might seem intrepid to some that he has dared to make an 18th-century salon concerto out of a Mozart piano sonata, but somehow one feels the composer might have given a nod of approval. Anyway, like all great music, it does not lose its profile in a new dress. It is Mr. Vito that supplies the charm; the accompanying ensemble, while proficient, is not as familiar and as relaxed in its assignment as he is. The Handel is well played but would have profited with a larger ensemble. This concerto, originally for organ, was arranged for harp by the composer. Equally as delightful as the Mozart is Vito's treatment of the Handel *Passacaglia* from a keyboard suite. Salzedo's *Jeux d'eau* is full of modern tricks, a good piece to show off a player's accomplishments, but musically empty compared to Ravel's keyboard piece of the same title. Debussy's *Arabesques*, with their delicacy and grace, sound like great music in comparison. The early Prokofiev *Prelude* is an only work for harp—a surprisingly delicate and poetic piece. The Falla music has been transcribed, as far as possible, to give the effect of a guitar. All in all, an attractive harp recital by a master harpist. The recording is excellent, with just the right amount of reverberation to give presence to the performers. —J.N.

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Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37*; Emil Gilels (piano) and L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire conducted by André Cluytens. Angel LP 35131, \$5.95.

▲OBVIOUSLY this is not the same performance that was made available domestically on the Period label. The extraordinary Gilels at least gets a fair chance to be heard in this version, although he inclines to a more poetic approach than he had in the other one, eschewing virtuosity as such in favor of the nicest restraint I have ever heard applied to this music. His finger work is just beautiful, and the accompaniment is self-effacing enough to let it all come through. The result is not Beethoven, as ordinarily conceived, but it is a benediction just the same. Good recording. —J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 4 in G, Op. 58*; Clifford Curzon (piano) with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch. London LP disc LL-1045, \$5.95.

▲ONE of the outstanding events of the year is this handsome recording of Beethoven's most wondrous concerto. It brightly mirrors a performance by Clifford Curzon that for poetry, sensitivity, and tonal suavity surpasses any other of this music I can recall. The coordination with Knappertsbusch falls a bit

short of perfection in the first movement, but in the others it is a model not worth study. Never before has any other recorded performance (not even Schnabel's) given us so intimately the hushed mystery and personal meditation of the second movement. The same may be said for the last movement in which the brilliance and ease of the playing produce many moments of sheer incandescence. Perhaps the most astonishing reaction one may gather from Curzon's playing on this occasion is that it seems as natural, as unforced as breathing. It is the sort of playing every musician of taste dreams about. And as you might guess, it is in very short supply. I would now recommend that London, if necessary, lure Curzon into a recording studio, lock the door and beg him to play some Schubert sonatas.

—C.J.L.

FAURE: *Ballade for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 19; Nocturnes—No. 2 in B, Op. 33, No. 8 in D flat, Op. 84, No. 5 in B flat, Op. 37, No. 7 in C sharp minor, Op. 74; FRANCAIX: Concertino for Piano and Orchestra*; Kathleen Long with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jean Martinon. London LL-1058, \$5.95.

▲HOW exquisitely Miss Long's piano sounds in this record; it is as much a tribute to her tonal quality as it is to London's engineers, who have done a wonderful job of recording these works. I have already found reasons to admire the

playing of Fauré's *Ballade* by Johannesen and Goehr, but this performance, more sensitively poetic and far less rhythmically four-square, must take precedence. Miss Long is what might be called a "chaste" artist in the most complimentary manner, for the purity of her legato and the beauty of her tone is at times almost ethereal, and yet she makes the *Ballade* a very realistic poetic excursion, as its composer intended it, free of "technical display and emotional exhibitionism." Like the lovely *Nocturnes*, a favorite form of Fauré's, this is music almost of a dream world, music of poetic serenity, an almost lost art these days. The idea to separate a Fauré program with the neo-classical *Concertino* of Jean Francaix was a good one (the Fauré comes first and then the Francaix on one side of the disc with the *Nocturnes* on the other). This little concerto is as clever and unpretentious as a Christmas tree bauble. Miss Long plays it better than the composer, making its fast movements as light as thistledown and its slow seem a more consequential *Lento*. Both of these works grow on one with subsequent playings. Miss Long has sympathetic orchestral support from Mr. Martinon.

—P.H.R.

●
FRANCK: *Symphony in D minor; Le Chasseur maudit*; Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Westminster WL-5311, \$5.95.

▲THIS is certainly one of the finest performances of Franck's *Symphony* on LP. Rodzinski, always a careful technician, reveals a sympathetic insight into Franck's lyricism and dramatic passion, blending the two aspects of the music effectively. One might well be hard put to make a selection between this version and those of Monteux, Paray and Furtwaengler, which also rank at the top of the list, for the orchestral playing is efficient and the reproduction tonally realistic except for slightly perceptible alterations in the levels of the recording, suggesting some variation in tape quality. But, on the whole, the reproduction is so clean and clear that anyone liking Rodzinski's performance

might well be undisturbed by the slight transitions in sound, which may not be perceptible to one who does not follow a score.

Rodzinski performs the tone poem, a more extravagant work which is macabre in the romantic way, equally as well. Here, the reproduction is consistently on a high level.

—P.H.R.

●
MOZART: *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622; Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra, K. 191*; Leopold Wlach (Clarinet) and Karl Oehlberger (Bassoon) with the Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Westminster LP 5307, \$5.95.

▲THIS is an excellent coupling for practical purposes. Neither of the two featured players can be classified as an outstanding soloist, but each one handles his assignment in a capable, assured manner while enjoying firm support from the accompanying forces under Rodzinski. Balance between soloists and orchestra is ideal, with the true tone qualities of the solo instruments accurately maintained throughout. Perhaps for study and reference purposes, as well as for casual listening, we are better off with these relatively impersonal readings. The personal touches of a brilliant soloist, which are the hit of a live performance, often wear a bit thin when constantly repeated in the home. After years of French domination of solo bassoon pieces on records it is a pleasure to hear the full-bodied, healthy quality of the German style. I could have done without the ornate cadenzas, however, which merely prove that some fearful sounds can be produced in the extreme top register of the instrument. Oehlberger has practically no competition; the only other LP version of *K. 191* is by Sharrow and Toscanini, in which the personality of the conductor completely submerges the unlucky soloist, who merely becomes an added accessory to the tautly whipped up ensemble. Wlach has to contend with Cahuzac and Kell, each of whom has something worthwhile to contribute from diametrically opposed

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Chanteurs Traditionnels de Paris; Orch. du Théâtre des Champs Elysées; Honegger cond.

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Reine Gianoli, piano

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Nadia Reisenberg, piano

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Kurt Appelbaum, piano

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Luiz, Bourdin, Mengo & other Orchs.

camps of instrumental playing. Wlach, however, has the best disc-mate.

•
MOZART: *Horn Concertos* (complete); Dennis Brain (horn) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel LP 35092, \$5.95.

▲**WHOEVER** conceived this recording should get some kind of prize. It was a brilliant stroke of programming, no matter the elementary logic of it (which does not seem to have occurred to anyone else). The works that stand in Koehel's sequence as numbers 412, 417, 447 and 495, respectively, are among the unalloyed joys of the Mozart literature. Each of them is more wonderful than the others, depending on which one you are hearing. To get all four in one sitting is almost too much, but not literally. Brain's solo work is, of course, exemplary, and Karajan is the soul of wit and good spirits in his accompaniment all the way. Nice sound, too.

—J.L.

■
OFFENBACH-ROSENTHAL: *Gaité Parisienne*; **CHOPIN-GLAZOUNOV:** *Les Sylphides*; Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP disc ML4895, \$5.95. **OFFENBACH-DORATI:** Suites from *Bluebeard* and *Helen of Troy*; Ballet Theatre Orchestra conducted by Joseph Levine. Capitol LP disc P-8277, \$5.72.

▲**THE** marriage of ballet music and hi-fi remains extremely congenial as the new releases listed above will attest. Both recordings are superb and neither seems to employ obvious tricks to titillate the ear in an unnatural manner. Ormandy's *Gaité Parisienne* is the star of this group; I doubt that this much played work has ever been given such a sparkling, jolly yet precise performance on records before. But *Les Sylphides* played by the powerful Philadelphia Orchestra—why, that's like taking a jet plane from Manhattan to the Bronx. The score is really only good for supporting an Alicia Markova anyhow; that is all it was ever intended to do. Glazounov's arrangement collected dust

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in music dealers' basements until Michel Fokine brought it to life.

Aside from the fact that Antal Dorati's arrangements of Offenbach are coarser of sound than Manuel Rosenthal's, they are first class measured against anyone else's. They are invariably well organized for linear strength and for practical choreography. Though *Bluebeard* and *Helen of Troy* are nothing our symphony orchestras should be tackling, the scores are acceptable enough for a relaxed evening by the phonograph. A word about the Ballet Theatre Orchestra to those who have never heard it in the flesh: the sound you hear from this splendid Capitol recording does not exist in the theatre; and don't you expect it, unless you are prepared to be disappointed. This would appear on the basis of this record, to be practically a first class organization.

—C.J.L.

•
PISTON: *Symphony No. 3*; the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra conducted by Howard Hanson. Mercury LP MG-40010, \$5.95.

▲**WHEN** Virgil Thomson heard this work, it seemed to him that there had been a "modernization of the composer's esthetic, long strictly neo-classic in the direction of neo-romanticism." He found this "the first (Piston) work of major proportions based on rounded, or flowing, material," which he correctly noted as an "infallible clinical sign of an effort toward personalized expressivity." I burden you with these quotes in particular because the *Symphony No. 4*, which may or may not substantiate them, is due on a Columbia disc before winter's end. The transitional *Third* is exceptional for its strength of structure but too plainly influenced by Copland to claim any individuality of utterance. Nor is it especially organic in its unfoldment, with contrasts of rhythm and temperament à la Corelli making do in lieu of true germinal evolution. Piston is a civilized man and this is a terribly civilized symphony, full of wit and urbanity and good manners. Its expressive content, however, either is low indeed or it does not communicate freely. It is as if the

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maturity of the composer triumphed over his mastery, so that, being a craftsman of unquestioned honesty, he didn't try to say any more than he had to say, which wasn't much. That he says it so skillfully is all very well, but I am not persuaded that the symphonic road ever is the right one for a thoroughgoing gentleman. These generalities notwithstanding, Mercury is to be congratulated for thus supplementing the recorded repertory of Americana. Hanson's performance is excellent, as far as one can say without a score at hand, and the reproductive quality is first class. —J.L.

●
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Antar—Symphonic Suite, Op. 9*; **GLAZUNOV:** *Stenka Razin—Symphonic Poem, Op. 13*; *L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London LP LL-1060, \$5.95.

▲THIS bids fair to be the version of the *Antar*. Paray's was superb, but not as well recorded, and its coupling-mate (the *Russian Easter*) was not done with half of Stokowski's histrionic flair. The Westminster *Antar* was sonically the equal of this new one, but I didn't like Scherchen's lumbering tempi; ditto Scherchen's *Russian Easter*. Now, then, anyone who insists that *Stenka Razin* is great music, or even as good a piece as *Russian Easter*, would have to be somewhat deaf. So that the latest issue is wide open to criticism on the matter of comparative coupling. But the *Antar* of Ansermet is so utterly beautiful, and so magnificently recorded, that no one who loves the piece can afford to pass it up. —J.N.

●
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Scheherazade, Op. 35*; The Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia ML-4888, \$5.95.

▲THERE is an older recording of this work by Mr. Ormandy and his famous orchestra, but this one—described as "a magnificent adventure in hi-fidelity sound"—has a sumptuous reproduction far ahead of the other. It's rather a pity to accent the hi-fi business since it places

an emphasis where it does not belong. That this recording ranks as a major achievement of its kind is undeniable but so too does the Stokowski version made in England with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Here, Ormandy shows off his superb ensemble and his first desk men with a virtuosic display that no other conductor has done, except Stokowski. And I, for one, think that Stokowski did much the same as Ormandy with one of the best, if not the best, orchestras in England. If you own the Stokowski, I can find no just reason for transferring your affections, but if you own any other version—and I am mindful of the splendid musical qualities of Monteux and Ansermet, who are unfortunately less well recorded—I suggest you hear this one. But do give Stokowski a play also, for he does some amazing things with this score which are in keeping with the composer's intentions, to say nothing of those of *Scherherazade*. Ormandy exploits the opulence and virtuosic accomplishments of his orchestra, giving a splendidly luminous rendition, but without making at least one listener recall the wily *Scheherazade*. —P.H.R.

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SHOSTAKOVICH: *Symphony No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 93*; the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia LP ML-4959, \$5.95. **THE SAME;** the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Eugene Mravinsky. Concert Hall Society LP CHS-1313, \$5.95.

▲WHEN this work was heard in New York for the first time, the critics were sharply divided. After several hearings, I am not able to make any more reasonable an appraisal than one could have inferred from a cross-section of the press notices. True, the piece is not essentially symphonic in any organic sense. True also, its impact is immediate and powerful. If I were to go on and on there would be little more to say, unless one cared to venture into the metaphysical matter of the composer's growth as manifest here

vis-à-vis his inextricable political context. The short of it is that I like the music enormously, find its appeal irresistible, and commend it to all open-minded listeners, even though I do not quite go along with its being called a symphony. The structure is not the essence, in other words, and if this gives you pause then you might as well forget the whole thing. The Russian performance is quite effective, and presumably the more authentic of the two. Mitropoulos, however, enjoys the benefit of a much finer orchestra and incomparably better engineering. So that the Columbia version, even with the conductor's vagaries of taste in the outer movements, is the preferred one by a sizable margin. —J.L.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 4 in A Minor, Op. 63; Pohjola's Daughter—Symphonic Fantasia, Op. 49;* the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anthony Collins. London LP LL-1059, \$5.95.

▲YEARS in Hollywood have not dulled the Sibelian sensitivities of this versatile conductor. His *Fourth* is full of the brooding majesty and the bitterness that lend this score a special place among the great masterworks of the 20th century. The silences are thundering in the *largo* pages; one is fairly transported to the land of the composer's fantasy, which is anywhere people are not and nature is. The sound is superbly big and clean, like a northern sky on a crisp winter's night. Withal, real competition for the Ehrling and von Karajan versions, both of which were favorably reviewed. I cannot enthuse over the present *Pohjola's Daughter*, although we have needed one long enough. Collins is a bit too perfunctory about it for my taste. Perhaps his interpretation will wear well, though; certainly I am delighted to have the work back in circulation. Now, then, when will someone give us *Belshazzar's Feast*? —J.L.

STRAUSS: *Ein Heldenleben;* Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner; RCA Victor LP disc LM-1807, \$5.95. **THE SAME:** Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene

Ormandy; Columbia LP disc ML-4887, \$5.95.

▲ON this occasion, the winner of the battle of sound is Victor. It is close, but as decisive as a 5 to 4 win in baseball. Both discs feature clear and gleaming sound; but Victor's has an aerated quality that one will not find in the somewhat compressed sonic layers of the Columbia, as well as a certain quality of diffusion not unlike the impression one gets when attending a concert in Chicago's superbly resonant Orchestra Hall.

Though the Chicago forces have been lately galvanized into a formidable band of music makers, they are still not so suave as the Philadelphians (what other orchestra is?). But under Reiner, they are capable of giving all the pleasure any reasonable person could ask for.

Ein Heldenleben is a great, sprawling work that carries on various levels of distinction and mediocrity. This inconsistency is easily seen in the various kinds of expression utilized (now personal, now purely posed) and in the different styles that are employed to move the listener, to paint him a picture, to make him use a memory that may include a knowledge of the composer's other works and his life story. To hold the work together requires a vast amount of study, experience, sympathy, and practice. The music also demands an orchestral technician of the highest order. He must be able to make us hear the complexities of the score without losing the grand line at any time. *Ein Heldenleben* is, for your reviewer, Fritz Reiner's meat. No one else alive today presents it so completely, not even Beecham (who has an obvious affection for the work). And though Ormandy reads it clearly and offers it to us effectively, he makes the work seem more expansively rhetorical than is becoming to it.

The RCA Victor disc is an outstanding issue and worth your attention. —C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Dances Concertantes; Dumbarton Oaks Concerto; Concertino and Three Pieces for String Quartet;* the Rochester Chamber Orchestra conducted by Robert Hull and the Gordon

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String Quartet. Concert Hall Society
LP CHS-1229, \$5.95.

▲**FINE** program, well played and adequately recorded. Only the *Three Pieces* has been done justice on microgroove; the *Dances* and *Dumbarton Oaks* have needed replacement for some time. This omnibus disc is therefore welcome, especially since it introduces the exquisite *Concertino* to LP. This little gem dates from 1920, when it was composed for the legendary Flonzaleys. There is only one movement, a sort of free sonata *allegro*, with the first violin playing *concertante* for the most part. The Gordons turn it out beautifully. —J.L.

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STRAVINSKY: *The Rite of Spring*; the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Igor Markevitch. RCA Victor LP LHMV-1, \$5.95.

▲**WHY** the Victor people give competition to Monteux (LM-1149) one doesn't know, for his version of this work is musically the exemplar and it doesn't

need replacing on sonic grounds. There is no cause for staring down this gift horse, however; the English public has esteemed it highly for two years and prefers it, indeed, to the composer's own version. Markevitch elicits a taut, but not tense, performance, a bit on the slow side, perhaps, but not lacking in the requisite propulsion; and it is very well recorded.

—J.L.

●
THOMSON: *Three Pictures for Orchestra*; Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Virgil Thomson. *Five Songs from William Blake*; Mack Harrell (baritone) with Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP disc ML-4919, \$5.95.

▲**IT** is a pleasure to see a large record manufacturer such as Columbia pay expensive attention to contemporary American music. All too often sturdy, worthwhile American compositions have been presented in a shamefully cheap

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LIVING PRESENCE

manner—both recording and performance-wise—for the purpose of intellectual patronage. Such practices worked for a while (listeners curious about their own century were, after all, starved to death for such vigorous stimulation), but let us pray they are a thing of the past. Certainly such beautiful recording and playing as we have here sets a lofty standard for Columbia's competition to shoot at. Virgil Thomson's *Three Pictures for Orchestra* (*The Seine at Night*, *Wheat Field at Noon*, and *Sea Piece with Birds*) were composed at rather widely separated points in the composer's career. They are not homogeneous in style; the *Seine at Night* is not a twelve-tone piece and does not show the influence of Webern as the others do. Not one of the works has much shape, and only *Wheat Field at Noon* has much sense of forward progress. But every one gleams with a tonal iridescence that makes them fascinating to the ear. The *Songs from William Blake* are stronger works. The simplicity, sensitivity, and delicacy with which Thomson has handled Blake's touching and humane poems is a joy to the spirit. Those who know Thomson's masterful opera *The Mother of Us All*, however, may miss a sense of freshness in the songs and may feel that the composer has often merely repeated himself. In any event, that prince of singers Mack Harrell superbly performs every song; and you may find that reason enough for wanting this record. —C.J.L.

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WALTON: *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*; William Primrose with Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; **HINDEMITH:** *Der Schwanendreher—Concerto for Viola and Small Orchestra*; William Primrose, Columbia Chamber Orchestra conducted by John Pritchard. Columbia ML-4905, \$5.95.

▲**MR. PRIMROSE** has chosen two modern works by two composers whose contrapuntal gifts are a delight to many musicians. William Walton's *Viola Concerto* is far removed from his massive and virtuosic *Belshazzar's Feast* and his violent

and surging *Symphony*. This concerto, with its hint of romanticism and its softer and more sinuous lines, is a product of mind and heart combined in a happy amalgamation. If I am not mistaken, Primrose gave it its first performance, and his warm-toned and expressive playing, which does not eschew sentiment, makes this somewhat unconventional work immediately accessible to the listener. Sargent is of the same mind as the violist and he gives an excellent account of the instrumental accompaniment, conducting Beecham's famous orchestra. Hindemith's *Der Schwanendreher*, or *The Swan-Turner*, is one of this composer's best and most immediately accessible works. As Mr. Ritchie said previously in reviewing another issue (June 1952), it is "based on the premise that music is an entertainment created through the invention and improvisation of the minstrel." Founded on medieval folk-tunes, "it imposes on a completely rhapsodic and free-flowing viola line not only the lovely tunes of the period but also the entire 18th-century form of the concerto." Hindemith once recorded this work with Arthur Fiedler's Sinfonietta, but the composer's playing of the solo part was poorly contrived. Of the two previous issues on LP, the Breitenbach-Haefner version was the better but it was hardly flattering to the true spirit of the music, being strangely lugubrious at times. Primrose and Pritchard substantiate "the life and sparkle of the score," giving a performance which is completely enjoyable. The recording in both works is excellent.

—P.H.R.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas for Cello and Piano* (Complete); *Seven Variations on "Bei Mannern"*; *12 Variations on "Ein Maedchen," Op. 66*; Pablo Casals (cello) and Rudolf Serkin (piano). Columbia set SL-201, \$17.85, or individual discs ML-4876-8, \$5.95 each.

▲**IF** you do not mind all the moaning and groaning that Casals goes in for, and which Columbia has reproduced faith-

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fully, then these discs are recommended without qualification. To point at this or that technical slip would be unbecoming, surely, in considering an achievement so long a-borning and so nearly unrealized. Casals is no longer a young man, and his virtuosic propensities never were as remarkable as his interpretative insights. You accept this or you do not. If you do not, then by all means stick with the wizardry of Janos Starker, whose Period versions of the Sonatas are among the phonographic treasures. To say that Starker is no Casals does him no injustice; Serkin is no Schnabel, for that matter. What Casals offers, in sum, is a breadth of musical personality that goes far beyond executive ability, beyond tone production and all the rest of it. He plays with the humanity, if you please, of a surpassingly great and humble person who has long since come to terms with life and with art, and who makes music just as naturally as most of us listen to it. In Serkin he finds an ideal collaborator, neither condescending nor forward. Why, we are entitled to ask, have these records been four years "in the works"—the tapes having been cut in 1950? Perhaps because some of the passages are not as perfectly Beethoven's as they might have been. No matter. Neither were Schnabel's. If ever we could be impelled to see the forest and ignore the trees, here is an opportunity. Congratulations to all concerned. —J.L.

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BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas for Violin and Piano, No. 7 in C Minor and No. 10 in G;* Ruggiero Ricci (violin) and Friedrich Gulda (piano). London LP LL-1004, \$5.95.

▲**TONE** trouble always has plagued Ricci, especially when he has turned to the classic style. His insecurity is manifest herewith in super-cautious attention to phrase markings; at any given moment everything is fine but the whole is not Beethoven. Gulda is deferent to the violinist, keeps his big tone politely in hand, still comes through more prominently than he would have with another

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collaborator. Ricci is a magnificent virtuoso, incomparable in Paganini or Sarasate where he can take wing and fly. But the disciplines of a Beethoven sonata are not properly imposed on him. When *brio* is tamed, for whatever reasons, the tamer loses. London's sound is only too lifelike.
—J.L.

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FAURE: *Sonata No. 2 in E minor;*
DEBUSSY: *Sonata in G minor;* Christian Ferras (violin) and Pierre Barbizet (piano). London LL-909, \$5.95.

▲**BOTH** of these sonatas have their imaginative and effective moments but neither builds up momentum or aims for traditional contrast. Nevertheless, both are sensitive and poetic works, and it is doubtful that either composer aimed to achieve a work similar to the best known and admired sonatas of the 19th century. These sonatas require finesse and perceptive expressivity to do them justice. Ferras and Barbizet are earnest musicians, who have given us pleasure from time to time, but in these works they are a bit rough technically and do not seem to be as sympathetic to the music as they might. Both are well played by Fournier and Doyen on Westminster discs. The Debussy is represented by four well played versions—my own favorite is the Francescatti-Casadesu performance. Good recording here, except for some hollowness of sound in spots.
—P.H.R.

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MILHAUD: *Suite for Violin, Clarinet and Piano;* **BARTOK:** *Contrasts for Violin, Clarinet and Piano;* Melvin Ritter (violin), Reginald Kell (clarinet), Joel Rosen (piano). Decca DL-9740, \$5.95.

▲**THIS** Disc is headed "Reginald Kell, clarinet," thus placing the emphasis on the star performer, but truth to tell, as handsomely as Mr. Kell plays—especially in the Milhaud—he is only one of an ensemble, all of who deserve equal praise. The Milhaud is one of those French folk-like works spiritually allied to the 18th century, but treated in a modern

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manner even to a suggestion of jazz. It's quite a delightful piece and Kell and his players play it charmingly, more suavely than did Perrenin, Delecluse and Haas-Hamburger on Period 563, and in a way which really substantiates its derivation from Lully and others of the late 18th century. In Bartók's *Contrasts*, a work which the composer wrote for Benny Goodman and Joseph Szigeti, Kell and his players are no so successful as Szigeti, Goodman and Bartók (Columbia ML-2213) or Mann, Drucker and Hambro (Bartók 916), because the romantic glow and refinement of Kell's clarinet take the bit out of this music. Two of our reviewers have disagreed on the merits of this work, but I share Mr. Peckham's viewpoint (June 1953), in which he says "this is a fine piece, one of Bartók's best, and one of the most important chamber pieces of the last 20 years." I also concur with him that the Mann-Drucker-Hambro performance is excellent, mainly because of superior recording to the nonetheless valued one by Szigeti-Goodman-Bartók. The present performance, though excellently recorded, makes this music seem "a slight piece," for all the fine musicality of the present performers. But lack of starch, where required, can leave a fine garment characterless, and so it goes with some music. Bartók's *Contrasts* has more character than is substantiated in this performance. —P.H.R.

PORTER: *String Quartet No. 6*; **CATURLA:** *First Cuban Suite* for eight wind instruments and piano; **ROLDAN:** *Ritmica No. 1* for wind quintet and piano; Henriette Roget (piano), *Quatuor Pascal* and *Ensemble de Soloistes de l'Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française* conducted by Georges Tzipine. Angel LP 35105, \$5.95 or \$4.95.

▲**STARTLING** contrasts, but good music all. Quincy Porter hasn't whatever it takes to win popular success, but he is a thoroughly well bred composer and his powers of communication are exceedingly acute if somewhat academic, so that

the appeal is mostly to the head. That does not mean that his cerebrations are without a considerable appeal; it only means that nothing lingers after one of his pieces is done. His *Quartet No. 6*, written in 1937, remains one of his happiest creations, perhaps even the strongest, and it is good to have it in the recorded repertory. Alejandro Garcia Caturla composed his *First Cuban Suite* in 1932. There is a static quality about its first movement, which must have been, in its time, prophetic of the irreverently sophisticated Alec Wilder. Today its whilom sauciness sounds rather like Poulencism, *tourista* variety, but not in the slightest painful. Amadeo Roldan (1900-39) is represented by his brief and exciting *Ritmica No. 1*, one of several such essays in stylized Afro-Cubano for which he is fondly remembered in the warmer latitudes. All three of the performances are first class. The sound is satisfactory. —J.L.

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WEBER: *Six Sonatas for Violin and Piano, Op. 10*; Ruggiero Ricci (violin) and Carlo Bussotti (piano). London LP LL-1006, \$5.95

▲**PAINLESS** and pretty the first time around, nowhere profound or edifying but full of felicity for the listener who does not demand that his attention be earned. Weber wrote these little works in 1810, a decade before he started turning out his famous operas. Oddly enough the publisher who had commissioned the *Sonatas* refused to put them out because they were, in his judgment, not sufficiently commonplace to encourage sales. Nowadays their whilom elegance seems commonplace indeed, especially in conspiracy with their paucity of musical substance. Anyone who can hear the burgeoning of Germany's first musical Romantic in them is to be envied. I hear nothing that sustains intent listening; that is either emotional or intellectual. Ricci's performance is in every way superb, although his tone is far less compelling than his virtuosity. Bussotti's accompaniment suffices. The sound is excellent. —J.L.

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BACH: *Three Chorale Preludes from Orgelbuechlein; Pastorale in F; Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her; Fantasia in G*; **BOEHM:** *Variations on Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ*; **WALTHER:** *Variations on Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich*; **BUXTEHUDE:** *Fantasia on Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern*; Fritz Heitmann (organ). Telefunken LP disc LGX66009, \$5.95.

▲ALL the diverse pieces above are grouped under the label "Christmas Organ Music." So be it; but, all the same, the works vary in interest from the magnificence of the *G major Fantasia* of Bach to the products of Boehm, Walther and Buxtehude. Not at all variable is the playing and the recording. Both are superb. The organ of the Ernst Moritz Church in Berlin sounds like a relatively new instrument; if it is, it represents a triumph of enlightened scholarship and skilled workmanship. Heitmann is in his best form and that, of course, insures us of grandeur, delicacy, and power at the appropriate expressive level. The recording is wonderfully lifelike with the most natural baroque-type organ sound I have yet heard. Ever so easy on the ears, too.

—C.J.L.

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BACH: *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II—Preludes and Fugues Nos. 17-24*; Wanda Landowska (harpsichord). RCA Victor LM-1820, \$5.95.

▲WITH this disc, Mme. Landowska completes her performances of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The photo on the cover is most appropriate, it conveys both contentment and happiness in the expression of the artist. And what an artist she is! No one who has heard her individualistic performances of Bach's famous clavier preludes and fugues would deny that hers is a vivid personality whose technical genius, unimpaired with time, makes these works live with the clean-cut and stylistic brilliance of a master-etcher. There was a time when there was less

pronounced black and white in Mme. Landowska's performances, when subtle color graduations prevailed, but these Bachian master-exercises are advantageously served by sharper delineation of line and phrase when the performer has both the spirit and the technique of a Landowska. It has been rightly said that the lady has become a legend in her own time. This is unfortunate because it precludes appreciation of lesser artists who lack the compelling vivacity of this performer, but she leaves this reviewer so spellbound with her playing on half a disc that he cannot take more at one sitting. RCA Victor engineers, working in Mme. Landowska's home in Connecticut, have done a wonderful job of recording her harpsichord. But the realism of tone lacks something which the player's older recordings had—best described as a welcome intimacy in sound.

—J.N.

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BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas No. 3 in C, Op. 2, No. 3; No. 19 and No. 20 in C minor and G, Op. 49, Nos. 1 and 2*; Friedrich Gulda (piano). London LP disc LL-999, \$5.95. *Sonatas, Op. 2—No. 1 in F minor, No. 3 in C*; Solomon (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1821, \$5.95.

▲ON some occasions, your reviewer has noted a tendency on the part of Solomon (especially in Beethoven sonatas) to neutralize music's expressive content. At such times, this otherwise great pianist seems to become enchanted with the sound of his playing. He is too much the musician to draw your attention exclusively to this aspect, however; he always pays his respects to the printed page. But what comes out is lifeless. His latest record is a good example of the point I wish to make. Compare, if you will, the alert and passionate playing of Gulda in the fine, early *C major Sonata*; and here you will notice technical powers almost as suave as Solomon's coupled with all manner of expressive shading and tensions that move the listener easily from one point to the next. The same is true of Gulda's exquisite playing of the ordinarily uninteresting "student"

sonatas, *Op. 49*. The London record is an exciting experience, and I recommend it as warmly as I can. Both recordings are pleasing as to sound and surfaces.

—C.J.L.

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BRAHMS: *Ballades, Op. 10; Capricci and Intermezzi, Op. 76* (LL-959, \$5.95); *Capricci and Intermezzi, Op. 116; Intermezzi and E Flat Rhapsody, Op. 119* (LL-960, \$5.95); *Rhapsodies, Op. 79 and Intermezzi, Op. 117* (LS-961, \$4.95); Wilhelm Kempff (piano). Available individually or in a boxed London set, no number assigned, \$16.85.

▲ONLY the Gieseking discs on Angel are competitive in terms of the ground covered, which is virtually the entire piano literature of Brahms. (Victor eventually will extend Rubinstein's sampling to these proportions.) Gieseking gave us the *Op. 118*, which Kempff does not. The latter does include the *Op. 10* and the *Op. 117*, however, which seems a fair enough exchange quantitatively. As to eminence and authority the two artists are on the same level if not in the same class, which is to say that adherence to either's conception of Brahms is a subjective matter because there can be no question of any consequence on technical grounds. Kempff's Brahms is poetic, contemplative, sometimes Chopinesque, more often Schubertian, never lumbering—and rarely as strong as it might be if it were none of the other things. The *B Minor Capriccio* in *Op. 76* is all *Schlamperei* and *Schlagobers* and *Alt Wien*, which is all right if that is the way the music strikes you. The fourth and fifth *Intermezzi* in *Op. 116* are exquisitely turned out—Kempff makes these rather commonplace pieces into haunting loveliness—but where is the drama of the final *Capriccio* in this group? In sum, one great pianist's way with Brahms is not another's, and who is to prove that rhythmic inertia is too high a price to pay for introspection that reveals?

—J.L.

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CHOPIN: *Sonatas in B flat minor, Op. 35 and in B minor, Op. 58*; Epic LP 138

disc LC5056; \$5.95. 24 *Etudes, Op. 10 and 25*; Epic LP disc LC3065, \$5.95. **MOUSSORGSKY:** *Pictures at an Exhibition*; **LISZT:** *Rhapsodie Espagnole*; 3 *Paganini Studies in E, E flat, and B*; Epic LP disc LC3066, \$5.95. All played by Alexander Uninsky (piano).

▲ALEXANDER UNINSKY has commanding technical powers uncommon in any age. No other pianist today has a broader dynamic range; no other comes to mind who can make such opulent sounds (even at fortissimo). Uninsky also has control over a hugely varied tonal color palette; and, still more, he reads scores with unusual fidelity and usually plays them in the appropriate style. Now, one would think such gifts would give us a dream pianist. But it is not enough. It is only enough for music with high technical content and low emotional voltage like, for example, some of the Chopin *Etudes* or the Liszt *Paganini Studies*. Uninsky's great weakness is, to my way of thinking, his rhythm. Not that he willfully violates the metrical indications for a piece of music; he's too much a musician for that. It is that his rhythm has no life, it does not support, there is no imagination in it. You can imagine what this does to the personal poetry Chopin put into his two great sonatas or his deliberately expressive *etudes*. Another thing: Uninsky seems ill at ease when he comes in contact with emotional communication. On such occasions, he either underplays severely or appears a bit nervous, if ever faithful to the printed score.

Your reviewer cannot, all the same, recommend an LP version of the Chopin *Etudes* other than Uninsky's; his technique and tone pile up a lot of points in many numbers. But the sonatas are another story; try Novaes, first, then Nat on the *B flat minor*; take Lipatti or Novaes on the *B minor*. As for the *Pictures at an Exhibition*, I must recommend Pennario, though his extremely brilliant but unyielding performance is not ideal. You can certainly do no better than Uninsky on the Liszt pieces, par-

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ticularly the three *Paganini Etudes*; they are something special. Mostly fine recording on all three Uninsky discs; the sound is only occasionally coarse-grained.

—C.J.L.

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SCHUMANN: *Fantasia in C, Op. 17; Kinderszenen, Op. 15*; Clifford Curzon (piano). London LP LL-1009, \$5.95.

▲MANY long months I have waited for this performance. I thought it would be *the* one. I should have known, having hoisted such hopes before, that it would not be. To these ears it sounds better than any on microgroove, but the prevailing slow tempi are, it seems to me, temperamentally alien to the music. Pending the possibility of Victor's putting the old Backhaus on LP, I will continue to keep my Firkusny for its passion, my Demus for its poetry, and this new Curzon for its rather too pusillanimous perfection. Good clear sound.

—J.L.

VOICE

BACH: *Cantata No. 51 "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen"; Cantata No. 202 "Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten";* Suzanne Danco (Soprano) with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra conducted by Karl Muenchinger. London LP LL-993, \$5.95.

▲A VERY NEAT production by all concerned. Top participants were engaged, some of the more communicable music of the immortal Sebastian Bach was selected, carefully rehearsed and recorded by experienced engineers. The record jacket gives both German text and English translation instead of the usual dissertation on Bach's unattainable stature as a musical genius. *Cantata No. 202* is a secular wedding cantata. It makes much use of solo oboe to accompany the solo voice, whereas *Cantata No. 51* is a church work for general use, featuring trumpet parts of considerable prominence at start and finish. This is folksy, comfortable music, and fortunately the singer and players have not tried to make anything more out of

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it. Danco infuses her part with a certain motherly *Gemuetlichkeit* that in no way belies her complete technical mastery of its requirements. Even the usually taut Muenchinger permits his players to emphasize the human qualities of their contributions. The recording is clear and bright. For my taste there is a little too much overbalancing of voice against orchestra, but then I imagine most singers would disagree.

—A.W.P.

●
BRITTEN: *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, Op. 31; Les Illuminations, Op. 18*; Peter Pears (tenor), Dennis Brain (horn), the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eugene Goossens. London LL-994, \$5.95.

▲AMONG modern song cycles, Benjamin Britten's *Serenade* and *Les Illuminations* remain two of the most highly imaginative and technically adroit works of the past quarter of a century. Britten's vocal writing in both compositions relates itself to the particular type of voice which his close friend and companion, Peter Pears, possesses. Though neither of these scores actually is dedicated to his companion in music, their development and character were, one feels certain, influenced by his vocal characteristics. And it remains a fact that he, more than anyone else, enters into the spirit and style of these cycles most successfully. Most of us are familiar with the 78-rpm version of the *Serenade* by Pears and Dennis Brain. This new version has more realistic qualities in reproduction and most sympathetic and understanding orchestral support by Eugene Goossens. Both singer and horn player are called upon for considerable virtuosity and both acquit themselves outstandingly, though in Pears' case there is sometimes not quite the ease of flexibility which he brought to his earlier version. But Pears sings this cycle better, and with clearer diction than did David Lloyd (Boston 205).

The *Illuminations* has been represented twice before on earlier LPs—by the gifted California soprano Alice Mock and by the German tenor Helmut Krebs,

neither of whom is as completely receptive to its expressive elegance and technical brilliance. Here, Peter Pears reveals his stylistic affinity with that of the composer. Musically, this work is of unusual interest since Rimbaud's poetry with its dramatic and picturesque qualities and more especially its unique character—at times violent in symbolic suggestion, has been most ingeniously handled by the composer, who has heightened its subtle implications and imagery. It is most unfortunate that no translations are given of these poems—admittedly no easy task as the writer discovered in doing the notes for the Krebs' version (Urania 7104). Pears' excellent diction in the *Serenade* may suffice for some, but translations would have proved more rewarding.

—P.H.R.

BYRD: *The Four and Five Part Masses*; Pro Musica Antiqua conducted by Safford Cape. EMS LP disc 234, \$5.95.

▲A LOVELY disc in every way. The *Four Part Mass* is one of the most personal, intimate, and sensitive settings of the Ordinary. The *Five Part Mass* is almost as distinguished. The singing of the five splendid soloists is delicate, smooth, and well balanced as to sound and timbre. Exceptionally warm and clean is Safford Cape's reading. Recording is first-class.

—C.J.L.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC, EASTER MUSIC, ANTHEMS, MOTETS AND MADRIGALS. St. Paul's Cathedral Choir, directed by John Dykes Bower. Angel 3516-B, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲AS a kind of memorial to the good-will tour of St. Paul's Choir through the States last year, this varied program should find a waiting public. And as an example of the quality of English choir singing, it may well be studied by some of our own organist-directors. It is inevitable that some of the music should suit the boys better than the rest. The Bach and other German numbers, for example, are a bit too English in conception, and the

three movements of Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* really need more impressive performing forces. On the other hand, Sweelinck's *Hodie Christus natus est* is given with proper spirit, and Herbert Howells' *A spotless rose* is quite lovely. The Vaughan Williams *Mystical Songs* (three out of five) introduce an excellent baritone soloist, Maurice Bevan. Mendelssohn's anthem, *Hear my prayer* (ending with the celebrated *Oh for the sings of a dove*) recalls the once extremely popular recording of the Temple Church choir with the exceptional boy soprano, Master E. Lough, but this performance does not have quite the same effect. Incidentally, this longish work is not done without cuts. Many American church-goers will welcome the opening number, called simply *After the blessing*—Walford Davies' setting of *God be in my head*.

—P.L.M.

English Medieval Christmas Carols; the Primavera Singers of the New York Pro Musica Antiqua conducted by Noah Greenberg. Esoteric LP ES-521, \$5.95.

▲THE pre-Bach repertory is nowhere more rewarding than in 15th-century England, which produced all of the lovely carols for this distinguished recording. There are 12 from the Stevens edition of "Medieval Carols," and another three from the Davison-Apel "Historical Anthology," in case anyone would care to document their listening. The texts are in Latin and old English, sometimes in both, and complete texts are included. To these ears every last item in the collection is a gem, and the singing of Greenberg's little group is of course a delight, as anyone who owns their previous issues would have fully expected. The sound is first rate, as customary with Esoteric.

—J.L.

KATHLEEN FERRIER—A Broadcast Recital: *The Fairy Lough* (Stanford); *A Soft Day* (Stanford); *Love is a babe* (Parry); *Silent Noon* (Vaughan Williams); *Go not, happy day* (Bridge); *Sleep* (Warlock); *Pretty Ring-time* (Warlock); *O waly, waly* (arr. Britten);

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Come you not from Newcastle: (arr. Britten); *Kitty my love* (arr. Hughes); Kathleen Ferrier with Frederick Stone at the piano. London LS-1032, \$4.95.

▲NOTHING could be more gratifying to Miss Ferrier's countless admirers than the issue of this disc—a well devised recital of English art and folk songs. This broadcast recital took place on June 5, 1952, 16 months and two days before her untimely death. The recording, taken from a tape, is so realistic that one almost feels the presence of the singer, and the piano of Mr. Stone is gratifyingly to the foreground. Miss Ferrier was in wonderful voice when she sang this recital, belying the reports of her ill health. How exquisitely and intimately she sings Vaughan Williams' *Silent Noon* (really a man's song) and the two difficult songs of Warlock. How beautifully she modulates her tones in almost everything, and how imitatively she sings the folk songs at the end, always a feature of a Kathleen Ferrier recital. I hope every listener who admires fine song singing will buy this disc as the profits from the sale of the record are being donated to a worthy cause—the Kathleen Ferrier Cancer Research Fund. —P.H.R.

●
GREGORIAN CHANT: *Alma Redemptoris, Ave Regina, Ave Maria, etc.*; Choir of Our Lady of Consolation Abbey, Stanbrook, Worcester, England. Gregorian Institute SA 1/2, two 10" discs, \$4.75 each.

▲THE Gregorian Institute is doing a valuable work in making available such recordings as this to show how chanting is done in the centers of learning today. The nuns of Our Lady of Consolation have a tradition going back to 1625; in more modern times they have benefited by the teachings of their late Abbess, Dame Laurentia McLachlan. Their recorded program is taken from *Chants of the Church*, a Gregorian Institute publication edited by the famous Benedictines of Solesmes. The recording is clear and quiet, with occasional strong sibilants. —P.L.M.

GREGORIAN CHANT (Easter Liturgy and Christmas Cycle); *La Schola des Pères du Saint-Esprit du Grand Scholasticat de Chevilly* conducted by R. P. Lucien Deiss, C. S. Sp. Angel LP 35116, \$5.95.

▲ONE of the things that has been wrong about Gregorian Chant on LP is that the prospective listener has been frightened away by the omnibus and expensive nature of virtually every issue. Even the fine Period recordings were put out in several, though separate volumes, so that one felt constrained to buy all of them or be denied the essence. Angel has solved this problem neatly by assembling a brief and beautiful representation of the literature in two of its holiday aspects. The vocal excellence of the *Grand Scholasticat* fathers is manifest, and the uninitiated will be grateful for the fine annotations by E. T. Squire. Complete texts are included. The overall sound is more sepulchral than studio-ish, but presumably that is the way it should be. —J.L.

●
MOUSSORGSKY: *Boris Godounov—Excerpts*; Alexander Kipnis (bass), Ilya Tamarin (tenor), RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nicolai Berezowsky. Bluebird LBC-1082, \$2.98.

▲IT MUST be all of eight or nine years ago that Kipnis, now retired as a teacher in Connecticut, made these excerpts from *Boris*, which bore the distinction of Victor set 1000. Vocally past his prime, Kipnis nonetheless still possessed a richly resonant tonal production that made his interpretation of Boris as telling as anyone since Chaliapin. It is gratifying to one who admired Kipnis to have this memento of his artistry on LP. The transfer has been satisfactorily accomplished.

—J.N.

●
THE OBERNKIRCHEN CHILDREN'S CHOIR singing *Der Frohliche Wanderer* (Moeller); *Die Nordseewellen* (Krannig); *Lowenzahn* (Knab); *Landsknechtsstand-en* (de Lassus); *Der Lindenbaum* (Schubert); *Der Wirbelwind* (Moeller); *Es waren zwei Konigskinder* (German Folk Song); *Unsere kleine Mandoline* (Moeller). Choir conductor: Edith

Moeller. Angel 10" ANG-64008, \$3.95. ▲WHAT a delightful little concert these sweet-voiced German youngsters give on this well recorded disc! Many of us have heard them in concert since they have been touring in our country with considerable success. There are 36 in the chorus, a gracious blending of girls' and boys' voices. The nice thing about these children is the attention to diction which, of course, is due to the training of their conductor, Edith Moeller, and her brother Friedrich. Each number seems a gem in itself and Mr. Moeller's own songs, written especially for these children, are especially likeable since the children seem to get so into the spirit of them—particularly *The Happy Wanderer* and *The Whirlwind*, in which they effectively imitate the wind. There are some vocal effects by tender young soloists that add charm to such numbers. This Choir was formed by the Moellers in 1949 in order to bring young people together and to sing for the joy of singing and "to advance the musical education of vocally gifted children." Here's a record for a Christmas gift which will appeal to the entire family. —J.N.

●
SCHUBERT: *Die schoene Muellerin*, Op. 25; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, (baritone) and Gerald Moore (piano). His Master's Voice ALP 1036-37, 2 discs, \$13.90.

SCHUBERT: *Die schoene Muellerin*, Op. 25; Anton Dermota (tenor) and Hilde Dermota (piano). London LL 971, \$5.95.

▲CONSIDERING the four previous LP *Schoene Muellerin* recordings I made it a point to stress the advantage of the tenor voice for proper interpretation of this cycle. Not only did Schubert conceive it in the higher key; in the nature of things the young romantic lover vainly wooing the Maid of the Mill is best portrayed by a light, clear voice. But circumstances alter cases. Not in some years have we been privileged to hail a young *Lieder* singer with the qualities of voice and the subtleties of style we find in Fischer-Dieskau. To quote the notations I scribbled as I listened to this new recording would far exceed the limits

of available space: it will have to suffice to call attention to his treatment of *Ungeduld*, in which he does not follow the familiar pattern of loud and soft contrasts, but makes the point of the third stanza by means of effective *legato*. He does not overdo at the start of this impetuous song, but saves for the outburst on *Dein ist mein Herz*. Dermota, singing in the high range, fails to offer serious competition. His voice, to be sure, is attractive in itself, though it occasionally runs to a too open quality. The difference between liberties convincingly taken and those which distort is pointed by a comparison of the two recordings. If I have not mentioned Gerald Moore in connection with Fischer-Dieskau, this is because I instinctively think of them as a pair—which is as right as it could be. The recorded piano tone is a little 'on the dead side; otherwise not much is left to be desired.

—P.L.M.

●
SHAKESPEARE-MENDELSSOHN: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (complete); Moira Shearer, (Titania) Robert Helpmann, (Oberon) Stanley Holloway (Bottom) and others in the Old Vic 1954 production directed by Michael Bentham; the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. RCA Victor set LM-6115, \$17.85.

▲MOST of the New York critics were merciless in their appraisals of this production, which opened a run of several weeks at the Metropolitan Opera House just as this album turned up in the stores. That old car barn of an auditorium is no place to present a play, anyway, so that one is not too surprised to find these discs a joy. At least you can hear everybody, which the critics could not, and I gather it is an added virtue that one can see nothing of what's going on, because the sets reportedly were something less than what they might have been. The tedium of which the critics complained is all here, and I must say that none of Shakespeare's famous plays lends itself less to heavy-handed treatment, but the comfort of one's own home pretty well compensates for the snail's pace at which everything

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moves except the wonderful Mendelssohn music. I have heard far more deft performances, but not in the intended Shakespearean context. As to the acting I have to agree that the principals, Shearer and Helpmann in particular, seem singularly ill-suited to essay such traditional-laden roles. But there, indeed, is the nub of the matter and the reason why anything I say, along with anything the Manhattan undertakers had to say must be discounted: England has a recurrence of *Midsummer Night's Dreams* regularly; has had, now, for hundreds of years. New York hadn't seen one, before the Old Vic came in, since before I was born. So who are we to say whether or not this production is all that it should be? Let us be grateful that we are favored with it. The New Orthophonic sound is resplendent. —J.L.

★
WOLF: 22 Songs from *Italienisches Liederbuch*; **BRAHMS:** *Lieder und Volkslieder*; Irmgard Seefried (soprano) with Erik Werba at the piano. Decca DL-9743, \$5.95.

▲THIS gracious artist seems equally at home in lieder as in opera. Perhaps others have sung some individual songs more tellingly than she—the opening *Ach kleine Dinge*, for example, which the late John McCormack sang so beautifully and delicately. Those who own Vols. I and IV of the Wolf Society will find that Miss Seefried compares favorably to most of the famous artists who sang the same songs that she sings here. There are 66 songs in all in the *Italienisches Liederbuch*, 30 of which were recorded in the Society Vol. IV. Miss Seefried gives us only one song which has not been represented on records before—No. 45, *Verschling' der Abgrund meines Liebsten Huette*; one almost operatic in character in which the betrayed one wishes death to the loved one. "May chasms engulf the cottage of my love," is the opening line. Miss Seefried sings it with fire as she does also No. 46, *Ich hab' in Penna*

einen Liebsten wohnen, which Ria Ginster failed to do in her recording. Miss Seefried sings two of Brahms earliest songs from *Opus 7*—*Der Trauernde* and *Volkslied*, which are *volksthumlich* in character. From *Deutsche Volkslieder*, she sings *Feinsliebchen*, *Schwesterlein* and *In stiller Nacht*, and ends her recital with *Vergebliches Staendchen*, which is also in the folk spirit. Her contrast between the lover and the maid in the latter is subtly contrived though not as tellingly as others. Erika Werba's accompaniments are praiseworthy, and so too is the recording, emanating from Deutsche Grammophon, which is intimate and yet lifelike with clear piano. —J.N.

●
WAGNER: *Selections from Die Meistersinger*; Otto Edelmann (baritone) with Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Loibner. *Tannhaeuser: O Du, mein holder Abendstern; Fliegende Hollaender: Die Frist ist um; Parsifal; Nein! Lasst ihm unenthellt*; Edelmann with Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Mo alt. Epic LP disc LC3050, \$5.95.

▲OTTO EDELMANN, best remembered for his Hans Sachs in the Columbia Bayreuth set of *Meistersinger*, owns a stable voice of richness and beauty of tone. He also has a fine range. For all his capabilities, Edelmann does not project either an interesting musical or dramatic personality. There is little emotional color in his work, and his span of dynamics is inordinately restricted. His vocal endowments undoubtedly make him valuable in secondary parts where attention is not centered on him for too long a time; but he has not all the resources for a part such as Hans Sachs, much less a vocal recital of this length. Rudolf Moralt supports the singer ably in this recording, and shows him to better advantage than the pedestrian Loibner. The orchestra sounds tired and perhaps under rehearsed. The recording is satisfactory. —C.J.L.

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